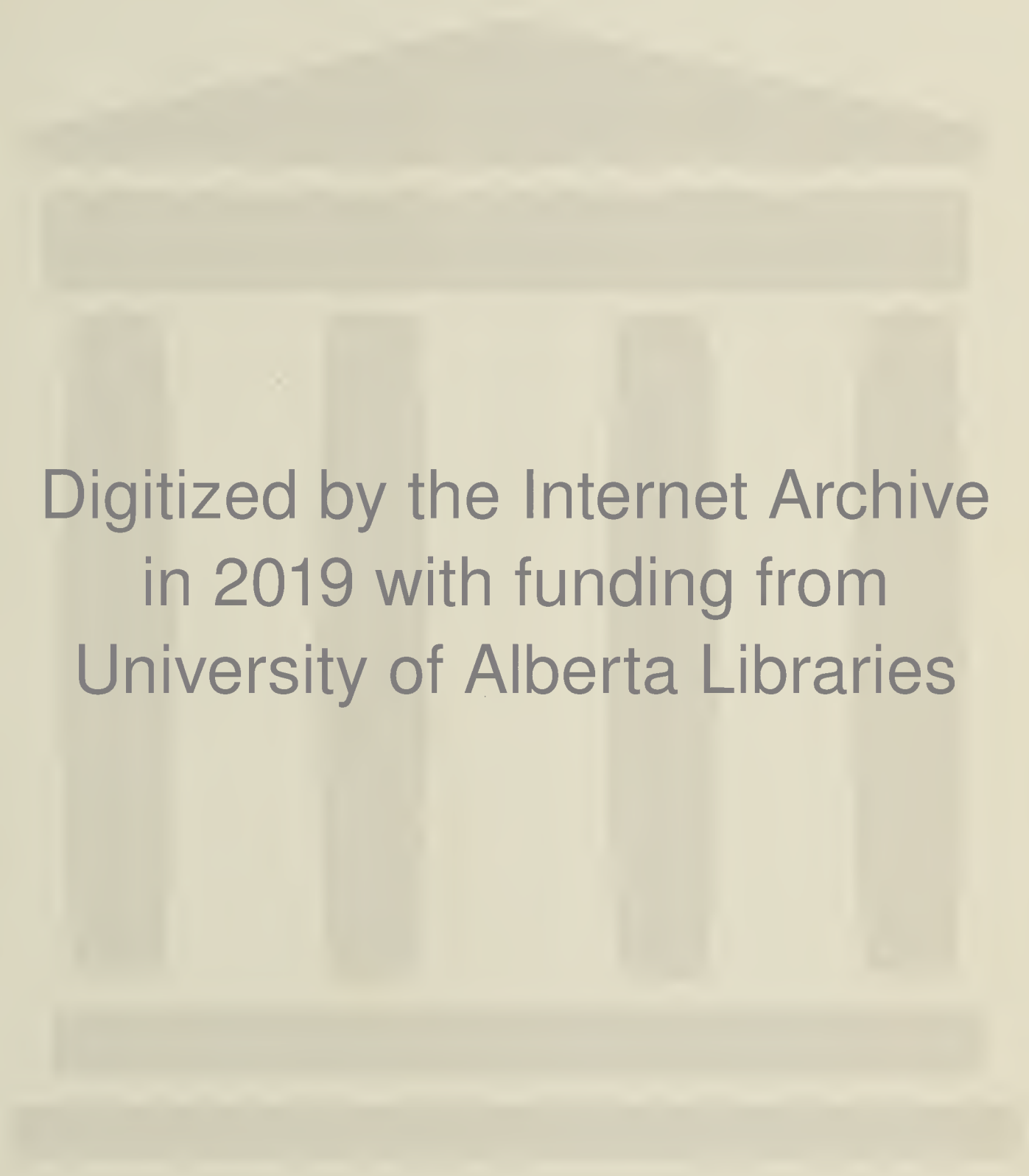


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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
FROM MELODRAMA TO SYMBOL:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF DICKENS' STYLE
IN NICHOLAS NICKLEBY
AND OUR MUTUAL FRIEND

by



VALERIE PURTON

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
OF MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

SPRING 1973

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled "From Melodrama to Symbol: A Comparative Study of Dickens' Style in Nicholas Nickleby and Our Mutual Friend" submitted by Valerie Purton in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

ABSTRACT

This thesis is an exploration of Dickens' style in one early and one late novel. I have restricted it because of space to a consideration of Nicholas Nickleby and Our Mutual Friend, with only passing references to other novels, but I hope that, within its limited scope, it may shed some light on Dickens' general development from the early to the late novels. I believe that the oscillations of critical taste, from the vogue for the early novels at the beginning of this century to the vogue for the later ones begun by Edmund Wilson, mislead us about the nature of Dickens' achievement. I attempt to refute the statement by A.O.J. Cockshut, in his chapter on Edwin Drood in Dickens and the Twentieth Century: "The distinction I make between the early and the late novels is in no way original; . . . In books like Pickwick Papers and Nicholas Nickleby we have a spirited, macabre and humorous development of the tradition of English melodrama. Grotesque fantasy of plot and character But in Little Dorrit, Great Expectations and Our Mutual Friend, we have symbolic comment on society On the whole : . . there is little mingling of the two methods." Such a polarisation of Dickens' achievement leads to the undervaluing

of Nicholas Nickleby and to the misinterpretation of Our Mutual Friend. In chapters on character, plot and the influence of melodrama I attempt to show the essential continuity of the two works and, in the final chapter, to explain where I think the real difference lies: in the development of Dickens' language, in the growth from the similes of Nicholas Nickleby to the metaphors of Our Mutual Friend. It is this development which has led to the artificial critical division between the early theatrical Dickens and the later prose poet--and it is these two characters whom I try to reconcile.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to thank Dr. Norman Page for his continual help, advice and encouragement in the preparation of this thesis.

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A NOTE ON THE TEXT

The page references throughout are to the Everyman editions of Nicholas Nickleby and Our Mutual Friend (1907; rpt. London: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1957), but I give also the chapter and book references. After their first appearances in the text, I refer to the two novels respectively as NN and OMF.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

If Nicholas Nickleby is "the elaborate performance of a cheap melodrama,"¹ Our Mutual Friend is an equally elaborate telling of a fairytale. If NN is steeped in theatrical imagery, OMF is steeped in references to Big Bad Wolves, Fairy Godmothers and nursery rhymes. In both novels there are a number of what G.K. Chesterton calls "proper, formal and ceremonial"² roles to be played within what is essentially--for the convolutions are present merely as the string round a parcel--a straightforward tale. In other words, neither talk of "deeper" characters nor of more complex plot can explain the development in Dickens' work from 1838-1864. As a man he developed perhaps in experience and understanding--though there may be room to doubt even that--and the more sombre views of a man of fifty-two are bound to colour his writing; but as an artist his most significant development was in language. Put oversimply, the similes of NN hardened into the metaphors of OMF. This growth allowed an enlarging of significance so that the later novels could be regarded as "symbolic comment on society"³ rather than as brilliant but hollow

picaresque entertainment--so that the river in OMF for example is not merely a river but a shroud for a whole society.

The process can be seen in little in a paragraph or two at the end of the chapter in OMF dealing with Riderhood's "death" and return to life (III, iii). Insignificant in itself, the passage does illustrate a peculiarly Dickensian mode of perception, and it was this which became perhaps the crucial factor in his development.

Mr Riderhood next demands his shirt; and draws it on over his head (with his daughter's help) exactly as if he had just had a Fight He then buttons his linen very moodily, twice or thrice stopping to examine his arms and hands, as if to see what punishment he has received in the Fight. He then demands his other garments, and slowly gets them on, with an appearance of great malevolence towards his late opponent and all the spectators. He has an impression that his nose is bleeding, and several times draws the back of his hand across it and looks for the result, in a pugilistic manner, greatly strengthening that incongruous resemblance Then, getting on his unsteady legs, . . . he takes his departure out of the ring in which he has had that little turn-up with Death. (Page 425.)

Dickens seems to watch his characters with restless acuteness; as Hillis Miller sees it, he sets up "a private theatrical"⁴ in which he plays all the parts, including that of audience. Watching Riderhood thus he is reminded by a simple action of another context: "[he] demands his shirt, and draws it on . . . exactly as if he had just had a Fight." The dialogue resumes, but the analogy is developing in the author's imagi-

nation. Another simple action brings it forward again: ". . . stopping to examine his arms and hands, as if to see what punishment he has received in the Fight." Now the other characters are drawn into the new "play within a play" and recast: "with an appearance of great malevolence towards his late opponent and all the spectators." Death and the rescuers undergo a sea-change in Dickens' imagination; a new picture is superimposed upon the "real" one. The dialogue continues, other actions "greatly strengthening that incongruous resemblance." By the end of the passage, there are no more "resemblances" or "as if"s; the new picture has been established: Riderhood "takes his departure out of the ring in which he has had that little turn-up with Death."

Slight as it is, the passage contains several insights into Dickens' artistic vision. There is that almost gratuitous imaginative energy which lets loose a riot of analogies, so that no stone remains simply a stone, but has its own surrealist second identity. Yet in OMF there is a noticeable disciplining of the "extravagant linguistic power"⁵ of the earlier novels; we are drawn, not into the author's wandering, quixotic imagination, but into the world of one of the characters. There is a curious double vision developing, in which Dickens "sees" his own characters as before, from the outside, defines them through their external appearances and language, and yet contrives to present their

own "inner" view of the world. There are the beginnings of this process in NN. The theatricality of the Crummles troupe pervades the novel. Role-play becomes a central theme: the Mantalinis act as if they were hero and heroine of romance, Nicholas behaves as if he were resident juvenile lead--but there is something casual about the "as if"; it is taken up and then lost, and other comparisons succeed it. The author, one feels, is not quite in control of his imagination; like the unreclaimed Bella Wilfer, he is "giddy for want of the weight of some sustaining purpose and capricious because . . . always fluttering among little things."⁶

In OMF, most of the comparisons witness not only to the fertility of the author's imagination, but to the true nature of the character involved. Riderhood, in the passage quoted, can have no sense of the magnitude of the struggle he has just survived. His world is crude and oversimplified. His daughter to him is simply a "Poll Parrot"; his religion is summed up in the use of the phrase "world-without-end-ever-lasting," with which he prefaces all serious remarks; when he discovers the body of Jesse Hexam his first thought is "Gaffer's done me!" Translated into the language of such a man, the "inexplicable journey" towards extinction is simply a fierce scrap in the ring with a fearsome opponent. His eventual death, locked in a struggle with Headstone, takes just that form. The images earlier in the chapter,

when the world presented is that of the doctor and his helpers, are elemental ones--air, fire, water--for the struggle seen properly, as they see it, is an elemental one. It is part of the "grand design" of the novel, the sounding of a theme which develops through the "deaths" of John Harmon and Eugene Wrayburn into a complex statement about decay and resurrection, built upon the underlying figure of the river. It is part of Dickens' more immediate design in this chapter to show one example of a man sinking from the healthy flow of life into the dismal swamp. He does this by moving from the image-world of the doctor and his helpers to the image-world of Riderhood. The former are translated beyond themselves and the language shows that they see themselves as involved in an elemental struggle: "the spark of life within him is curiously separable from himself now, and they have a deep interest in it, probably because it is life and they are living and must die"; "He is struggling to come back. Now he is almost here, now he is far away again"; "some hazy idea that if affairs could remain thus for a long time it would be a respectable change, floats in her mind. Also some vague idea that the old evil is drowned out of him . . ."; "the doctor declares him to have come back from that inexplicable journey where he stopped on the dark road, and to be here."

This last authorial paraphrase of the doctor's

actual words tells us better than dialogue how the world looks to him; we know too how it looks to Pleasant Riderhood and to Bob Gliddery, from the images used on their behalf by the author; and, with his return to consciousness and the consequent shift of the metaphor to the boxing ring, we know too how the world looks to Rogue Riderhood.

No comparable widening of perspective exists in NN. There is a wealth of external description of actions and of characters, but a sense also that the author has no more recourse than the reader to their hidden centres of being--that he too must simply observe:

Miss Squeers made no more direct reply than surveying her former friend from top to toe, and elevating her nose in the air with ineffable disdain. But some indistinct allusion to a "puss" and a "minx" and a "contemptible creature" escaped her; and this, together with a severe biting of the lip, great difficulty in swallowing, and very frequent comings and goings of breath, seemed to imply that feelings were swelling in Miss Squeers' bosom too great for utterance.⁷

Compare with that the economy of the Jenny Wren descriptions--still based on external observation, but with an added dimension:

The queer little figure, and the queer but not ugly little face, with its bright grey eyes, were so sharp, that the sharpness of the manner seemed unavoidable. As if, being turned out of that mould, it must be sharp.⁸

"I stand the honourable Mrs T. on my bench in this corner against the wall, where her blue eyes can shine upon you," pursued Miss Wren, doing so, and making two little dabs at him in the air with her needle, as if she pricked him with it in his own eyes.⁹

"Ah!" . . . chopping the exclamation with that sharp little hatchet of hers . . .¹⁰

Jenny Wren's sharpness grows in Dickens' imagination as he develops the character; it begins in simile but soon hardens into metaphor, into a veritable "sharp little hatchet," and this is not gratuitous imagining, but a way of revealing character. Many of Jenny Wren's fantasies have the ferocity of her thwarted childhood and take the form of dire punishment to be meted out to her various tormentors--pepper poured through the key-hole at teasing children, a red-hot spoon forced into the mouth of the imaginary suitor. In her extreme physical helplessness and her extreme moral strength she defends herself with her own metaphorical weapons: sharpness of manner and acuteness of perception. In her own mind she is obviously decked out like a miniature Joan of Arc, fit to battle the world.

A more detailed examination of treatment of character, particularly of Eugene's character, can be left until a later chapter. The point to be brought out here is that there is no shifting of method, no evidence of a decision to answer the critics and treat characters "internally": there is rather a growth in linguistic power evident in greater economy and more frequent use

of metaphor, which produces a much fuller sense of character. Perhaps George Eliot's advice was taken to heart: "if Dickens could give us their psychological character--their conceptions of life and their emotions--with the same truth as their idiom and manners, his books would be the greatest contribution Art has ever made to the awakening of social sympathies" (July 1856).¹¹ Certainly a more subjective approach to character was in his mind: he planned, he said, to show a city "in the new light of being actually unknown to all the people in the story, and only taking the colour of their fears and fancies and opinions."¹² Yet it seems likely, as Cockshut observes, that "the word 'influence' is apt to be misleading when applied to Dickens. It would seem that he was incapable of being influenced except in the way he wanted to go. His imaginative system could not assimilate matter alien to it."¹³

OMF is a greater achievement than NN but in my opinion it is a more natural development from the earlier novel than critics generally acknowledge. There seems to me to be little shift of attention or intention; any greater success with characters or greater significance of plot are primarily the result of a much more developed linguistic structure and it is this which builds up the "world" of the later novels.

NN shows the beginnings of a "world" of its own. Similes grow and change within the novel and bind it to

some extent together. One recurring image common to both works is that of the haze surrounding wealth--a haze of corruption. Perhaps two passages containing this image set side by side can best show the different stages of linguistic development. The first describes Nicholas' and Smike's journey from Yorkshire to London:

It was by this time, within an hour of noon, and although a dense vapour still enveloped the city they had left, as if the very breath of its busy people hung over their schemes of gain and profit and found greater attraction there than in the quiet region above, in the open country it was clear and fair. A broad, fine, honest sun lighted up the green pastures and dimpled water, with the semblance of summer, while it left the travellers all the invigorating freshness of the early time of year. The ground seemed elastic under their feet; the sheepbells were music to their ears; and, exhilarated by exercise, and stimulated by hope, they pushed forward with the strength of lions.¹⁴

Spiritual blindness represented by mist or smoke or fog is one of Dickens' favourite images. The country as a type of innocence contrasted with the city as a type of corruption is another. Such images recur and develop throughout the novels, the former reaching its climax perhaps in Bleak House, while the latter is particularly important in Martin Chuzzlewit and The Old Curiosity Shop. In this early work, both occur in simplest possible form in the straightforward comparison of the first sentence. After that the description loses any originality and lapses into the conventions of

eighteenth century pastoral. Incipient personification of the sun ("broad, fine, honest") develops no further and the passage ends in a welter of clichés: ("music to their ears," "elastic under their feet," "the strength of lions"). The next paragraph sums up the preceding description in a quasi-religious homily: "for nature gives to every time and season some beauties of its own; and from morning to night, from the cradle to the grave, is but a succession of changes so gentle and easy, that we can scarcely mark their progress."

Apart from revealing the extreme sanguinity of a youthful author and his imitative ability, the description tells us nothing relevant to NN. Certainly there is a shared youthfulness in the hero and his surroundings; but to link "the strength of lions" with Smike is to show a basic carelessness over delineation of character. "Character-drawing occurs in certain scenes and description in others; there need be no cohesion of the two" seems to be the author's philosophy. This "short-term" approach which makes every scene autonomous, results in NN in an arbitrary treatment of character and frequent inconsistencies. Fanny Squeers' linguistic ability, for example, changes radically from scene to scene as she is used for a different purpose in each; a parallel might be the erratic "Zummerzetshire" accent of Squire Western in Tom Jones. In each case there is an absence of a coherent vision of the novel

as a whole. Each episode coheres and reaches its own climax as, in the example above, the description of nature reveals finally the pattern of youth and old age--but that climax may have little or nothing to do with major statements in the rest of the novel. It would be difficult to support the view that NN is in any way deeply concerned with the problem of growth and decay.

The hint, in the "haze" image and its occasional recurrence in NN, that there is scope for much more complex development, is vindicated in the poetic cohesion of OMF. The following passage, superficially reminiscent of the famous Bleak House fog, could only belong to OMF:

It was a foggy day in London, and the fog was heavy and dark. Animate London, with smarting eyes and irritated lungs, was blinking, wheezing and choking; inanimate London was a sooty spectre, divided in purpose between being visible and invisible, and so being wholly neither. Gas-lights flared in the shops with a haggard and unblest air, as knowing themselves to be night creatures that had no business abroad under the sun; while the sun itself, when it was for a few minutes dimly indicated through circling eddies of fog, showed as if it had gone out and were collapsing flat and cold. Even in the surrounding country it was a foggy day, but the fog was gray, whereas in London it was, at about the boundary line, dark yellow, and a little within it brown, and then browner, and then browner, until at the heart of the city--which call St Mary Axe--it was rusty-black. From any point of the high ridge of land northward, it might have been discerned that the loftiest buildings made an occasional struggle to get their heads above the foggy sea, and especially that the dome of St Paul's

seemed to die hard; but this was not perceivable in the streets at their feet, where the whole metropolis was a heap of vapour charged with muffled sound of wheels, and enfolding a gigantic catarrh.¹⁵

I have quoted the passage in full, despite efforts to "edit" it to what seemed relevant to the argument and this in itself suggests the much greater density of the writing. Every image involves itself in the central concerns of the novel. From the initial scene-setting opening sentence, the novelist launches into a sea of metaphor, sprung from and flowing into the world of this particular book. The distinction between "animate" and "inanimate" propounded by the second sentence was begun in the opening chapter with the horrible doubt over Gaffer's find: "What he had in tow, lunged itself at him sometimes in an awful manner . . . and sometimes seemed to try to wrench itself away, though for the most part it followed submissively" (Page 5). The dead are often more alive than the living. Twemlow is just "an innocent piece of dinner furniture";¹⁶ "charming old Lady Tippins" is more a conglomeration of falseness than a living being; Venus' bones and skeletons and bottled Hindoo baby, like Wegg's severed leg which he still considers part of himself, are in a strange limbo between what is living and what is dead. There are various sorts of life too--the "night-creatures that had no business abroad under the sun . . . haggard and unblest" remind one of that slimy underworld of life in

which dwell Hexam and Riderhood and, morally, Fledgeby, who "holds as tight as a horseleech" when his interest is concerned (Page 252, II, v). Riderhood lives like a water-rat "deep and dark in Limehouse Hole" (Page 331, II, xii); Hexam and Lizzie appear first in a boat "Allied to the bottom of the river rather than to its surface, by reason of the slime and ooze with which it was covered." The whole novel is full of creatures rising out of and sinking into the primeval slime. Civilisation has long ago past its Golden Age and is degenerating. The "mushroom men" like Veneering are choking a debilitated aristocracy. "He'll be the death of me!" mourns Twemlow as Veneering baffles him (Page 240, II, iii). Since the decline from the Golden Age it is as if the sun "had gone out and were collapsing flat and cold." The collapse of Riderhood and Headstone, who are found lying under the ooze and scum of the river, is prefaced by a decline as of a dying world: "Rigid before the fire, as if it were a charmed flame that was turning him old he sat, with the dark lines deepening in his face, its stare becoming more and more haggard, its surface turning whiter and whiter as if it were being overspread with ashes, and the very texture and colour of his hair degenerating" (Page 759, IV, xv). The sense of a corruption centred on London, with circles of grey, dark yellow, brown, darkening to rusty black, recalls the spread of decay and infection

from the Harmon murder which "went up and down, and ebbed and flowed, now in the town, now in the country, now among palaces, now among hovels"¹⁷ like moral sewage. It gradually corrupts and darkens, apparently, the character of Mr Boffin; it brings shame and disgrace on Lizzie Hexam; its black influence is a centre of evil spreading outwards like the fog into the clean countryside as far as Plashwater Lock. Betty Higden tries to escape by fleeing into that countryside from the horror of the City Poorhouse; John Harmon tries to escape by burying his true identity; Jenny Wren escapes by climbing upwards into the world of "bright children" away from her place below as a quaint little shrew. Escape from self, from the world, from the consequences of one's actions, from death, becomes the crucial movement for most of the characters. In almost all the death scenes, particularly in Eugene's and Riderhood's struggling back from the depths of unconsciousness, recurs the image of drowning. Here London itself, the "world" of the novel, realizes its own danger and tries to escape: "the loftiest buildings made an occasional struggle to get their heads above the foggy sea, and especially . . . the great dome of St Paul's seemed to die hard." At this point in the story, however, no escape is visible for most of the characters. Bella is still trapped in her selfishness, Eugene in his inability to choose, Headstone in the depths of hopeless passion

beneath a surface calm; trapped in the fog of deception, they can see no escape "in the streets at their feet." The whole movement of the novel seems arrested at this opening of the Third Book, incapable of movement as "enfolding a gigantic catarrh." It is a moment of poise, meant to remind one of "the whole case so far," in the words of an earlier chapter. Yet in the preceding chapter, Sophronia Lammle has made the decisive move to free Georgiana and thus to escape from the role she is trapped in, by revealing to Twemlow that she is a matchmaker; perhaps that is a way out of the stagnation-- "muffled sound of wheels through the fog."

Certainly this passage could belong to no other novel. It has a poetic link with these characters and this story through images, which grow often into permanent symbols and which make a poem discrete in a way not usual in something as bulky as a novel. Any of the sections of "In Memoriam" are recognisably from "In Memoriam" and could be from no other poem of Tennyson's. It is as if the old yew tree grasps the whole poem with its clinging roots. Yet the comparison cannot be carried further, for sections of "In Memoriam" can and do stand by themselves, just as scenes in NN--Nicholas beating Squeers for instance--have become familiar in their own right. It is impossible to name any scene

from OMF which could stand alone. So much depends on the knowledge and understanding of the metaphorical world built up around the characters and actions that the episodic enjoyment of NN is changed. Critics on both sides of the Great Divide of Dickens' work have argued that the difference is one of approach to subject matter: in NN Dickens uses his talent for grotesque stagey melodrama and is essentially dramatic in approach; in OMF he has metamorphosed somehow into a "prose poet" more concerned with creating symbols of society than with the telling of a tale. That both claims are untrue--or at least grossly exaggerated--I hope to prove by examining, in a later chapter, Dickens' debt to the theatre, how it evolved and what, if anything, happened to it in OMF, in the context of which it is rarely mentioned. In this introductory chapter, I will look briefly at a scene from each novel, both in my opinion successful, and hope to prove that the approach and the devices used are identical and that the difference again is one of language. Both scenes involve the build-up of a humorous situation to the point of laughter, albeit bitter; both hinge on intentional and increasingly ludicrous hypocrisy; both illustrate unpleasantly the power of one person over another, revealed as always in Dickens in a sort of linguistic take-over of one character's world by the other; and both, too, illustrate their author's continuing fascination with the surface of things and have as

their central stage prop a mirror.

Fanny Squeers before her glass in Chapter Twelve of NN, is a mock-heroic situation reminiscent of Belinda in "The Rape of the Lock." The major difference is one of subtlety. Dickens cannot yet trust his audience to draw the right conclusions for themselves (except when he is using a familiar melodramatic situation) and he often hampers his character with misplaced comments and redundant unfunny asides. Here he sets the scene and establishes attitudes from the beginning: "The hungry servant attended Miss Squeers in her own room . . . to curl her hair . . . and administer as much flattery as she could get up for the purpose." He even directs a rather gratuitous barb at the aristocracy before he begins in earnest: "for Miss Squeers was quite lazy—enough (and sufficiently vain and frivolous withal) to have been a fine lady; and it was only the arbitrary distinction of rank and station that prevented her from being one." Once the "play" has begun, however, he joins the audience and revels in his characters' absurdities, restraining himself from commentary until the end. His aim is wholly dramatic: he must make the scene work and "get the laugh." The acting instructions are in the text: "'She does toss her head,' observed Miss Squeers with an air of abstraction. 'So vain and so very--very plain,' said the girl. 'Poor 'Tilda!' sighed Miss Squeers, compassionately."

Dickens is at his best in NN when he allows comedy of character to go on unchecked by explanation or moralizing. He has a dramatist's ear for dialogue for its own sake rather than as a means of revealing character. This is muted in OMF perhaps because of a greater care for character and less delight in the situation exploited for itself--perhaps in fact because Dickens became more of a novelist and less of a dramatist. At any rate, Fanny Squeers is exploited to the full in various situations with little concern for consistency, particularly in the matter of speech. Since she is cast here in the unlikely role, for her, of romantic heroine, she speaks increasingly in the recognised heroic tone. On her first appearance with Nicholas in Chapter Nine she was predictably homely in speech as well as in appearance: "I never knew anything happen so cross . . . I am very sorry I intruded, I'm sure." She talks of Nicholas to 'Tilda in much the same way: "Don't ask me what he said, my dear . . . If you had only seen his looks and smiles! I never was so overcome in all my life!" The humour in the present scene comes partly from the miscasting of such a character in the "Clarissa" role and from the consequent change in manner: "'Phib!' said Miss Squeers dramatically, 'I insist upon your explaining yourself. What is this dark mystery? Speak!' . . . 'Gracious Heavens!' exclaimed Miss Squeers, clasping her hands with great

dignity, 'What is this?'" The actions and "timing" are perfect. Later, in the letter finally exposing her baseness, the broad colloquialisms and mixed metaphors achieve the desired effect, unlikely as they are. Dickens is scarcely concerned to depict character, but to exploit a comic type. A parallel, one of many, is the stage Yorkshireman, John Browdie, whose broad accent, besides slowing down the reading of a scene, jars ludicrously with the clipped but quite comprehensible tones of 'Tilda and Fanny, who presumably in a realistic novel, would have given evidence of having shared his linguistic background. The dramatic end justifies any means and the result is isolated brilliantly successful scenes, but scarcely in the end a "whole" novel.

There are other linguistic developments in the scene which prefigure Dickens' later concerns. "Phib" the "patronising abbreviation" for the brow-beaten maid, is one of many examples of one character accosting another, so to speak, linguistically. Characters, even in early Dickens do not exist in isolation. They influence one another by imposing on the novel their own view of the world. Thus Mrs Squeers' deliberately careless misuse of Nicholas' surname and her substitution of "Knuckle-boys" is both an amusing reminder of her major preoccupation and a serious indication of her general carelessness about other people and their identities. Dickens' obsessional concern in all his novels for words and

names, including its development in the more abstract direction in OMF of the Analytical Chemist and the Golden Dustman, is part of his increasingly metaphorical approach and will be dealt with in more detail in a later chapter.

The "punch-line" in the scene with Fanny and her maid is in the form of a simple pun and an irrepressible authorial aside: "'Because they can't help it, miss,' replied the girl, 'the reason's plain.' (If Miss Squeers were the reason, it was very plain.)" Yet there is a verbal neatness in this method and an acuteness in the comments on character which cannot be bettered in OMF. From the early novels, Dickens achieves his own form of introspection for his 'two-dimensional' characters--by giving them literally a third dimension. Miss Squeers, "looking in her glass . . . like most of us . . . saw--not herself, but the reflection of some pleasant image in her own brain." This form of subjectivity is the essence of Dickens' world and in the later novels "reflections," literal and metaphorical, abound, culminating in the introduction of the Veneering dinner-party through a huge mirror and through their reflections in the frosty silver. Only after the scene is over does Dickens depart from a dramatic approach and tells us what to think, in a "serious" postscript. In this case there is little moralising and the cold horror of the sharp departure from comedy, the removal of masks once

the play is over, justifies the passage:

Spite is a little word, but it represents as strange a jumble of feelings as any polysyllable in the language. Miss Squeers knew as well in her heart of hearts that what the miserable serving girl had said was sheer coarse lying flattery, as did the girl herself.

Again it is through examination of a word that Dickens reaches the truth. Perhaps Fanny is revealed as the personification of Spite, a grotesque allegory rather than a character; but that does not make her merely a figure of fun. As John Gross observes, "After a time, reading Dickens, one learns to catch a certain stern, uncompromisingly serious note."¹⁸ It is in fact a moral horror akin to Hamlet's "Let her paint an inch thick, to this favour she must come"--and despite the crude swingeing approach--or perhaps even because of it-- Dickens achieves an impressive insight into corruption.

In Book Two, Chapter Four of OMF, in which the Lammles gull the pathetic Georgiana Podsnap, there is a similar revelation of corruption, achieved in a similar way. The scene is set this time and the battlelines of Good and Evil drawn up, not by direct statement as in NN, but purely linguistically: "To use the cold language of the world, Mrs Alfred Lammle rapidly improved the acquaintance of Miss Podsnap. To use the warm language of Mrs Lammle, she and her sweet Georgiana soon became one: in heart, in mind, in sentiment, in soul" (Page 240).

The two distinct linguistic worlds here created are in combat throughout the novel, as they are in isolated incidents in NN. Degrees of evil in a character are measured by how far he succumbs to false language, that is to a false view of the world. As always Dickens at his most successful defines moral issues in terms of a linguistic struggle. Georgiana is trapped in other people's metaphors--at once a serf, a baby imprisoned in a cradle, a shivering infant attacked by an animated toy horse:

When-ever Georgiana could escape the thralldom
of Podsnappery; could throw off the bed-
clothes of the custard-coloured phaeton and
get up; could shrink out of the range of her
mother's rocking and (so to speak) rescue her
poor little frosty toes from being rocked
over

Mr Podsnap is linguistically reinforced as emperor, Mrs Podsnap as aristocratic rocking horse; the only lapse from metaphor--"(so to speak)"--refers to Georgiana herself. Like the other growing, reclaimable characters--Bella and to a lesser extent Lizzie--she is not "hardened" into a particular metaphor and is drawn only reluctantly into other people's worlds. Her state of captivity there is also shown linguistically: when she rashly uses the word "lover" of Mr Lammle, she trembles because "I was afraid I had said something shocking. I am always saying something wrong to Ma." In her father's eyes, visitors, "when they could not bask in the glory of him, the sun, should take up with the pale, reflected light

of the watery young moon, his daughter." The stagey approach of NN, where truth waited in the wings, to be revealed only at the end of the scene with the author's comments on Spite, has now in a way become even more theatrical. Truth is now a character on stage, or at least threatening to make an entrance, with a metaphorical disguise of its own: "The handsome fittings and furnishings of the house in Sackville Street were piled thick and high over the skeleton upstairs, and if ever it whispered from under its load of upholstery 'here I am!' it was to very few ears."

Altogether, the dramatic approach is as much in evidence here as in NN, the major difference being that in this scene it is roundly condemned. In a society such as this where everyone acts out emotion, it is a positive handicap to have any real feelings: "Mrs Lammle bestowed a sweet and loving smile on her friend, which Miss Podsnap returned as best she could."

Georgiana, whose affection is real, not feigned, is a victim of society because she cannot act. She might well with Hamlet say "I know not 'seems'," though she is completely duped by the Lammles' performance:

"Sophronia's glance; . . . shaded off into a cool smile . . . with her eyes upon her lunch and her eyebrows raised." Alfred "put one of Sophronia's locks to his lips . . . 'Sophronia!' murmured Alfred, 'My life!' and kissed her hand. In return for which, she kissed his

watchchain." There is an echo of the Mantalini, whose roleplay was merely amusing, become suddenly sinister and threatening. Georgiana, like Eugene, John Harmon and Bella, who miscasts herself as a "mercenary wretch," has no role to play and struggles to find one. At the same time, she must resist being drawn into the Lammles' evil fairytale world:

"You must know, you dearly beloved little goose that once upon a time there was a certain person called young Fledgeby. And this young Fledgeby, who was of excellent family and rich . . . there sees, with Mr and Mrs Lammle, a certain heroine called--"

"No, don't say Georgiana Podsnap!" pleaded that young lady, almost in tears. "Please don't. Oh do do do say somebody else! Not Georgiana Podsnap. Oh don't don't don't!"

Again she refuses a role and remains innocent of the play-acting which lures everyone else. Eugene is tempted to act "Sir Eugene Bountiful" to attract Lizzie; Bella is only saved from her own wilful miscasting of herself by Mr Boffin's assumption of the role of miser. Theatricality is centrally important in OMF just as it is in NN. It is in fact part of the theme, developed thoughtfully and consistently. In NN mask and "reality" often become so confused that one feels the author has forgotten whether Nicholas, for example, is acting or not; in OMF the touch is surer, but the aim is much the same.

The dramatic build-up to a climax here is as in NN: the piling up of implausibilities until reader and author

reach a peak of disbelief:

"What a situation!" cried Miss Squeers, "on the brink of unconsciously destroying the peace and happiness of my own 'Tilda. What is the reason men fall in love with me, whether I like it or not, and desert their chosen intendeds for my sake?"

"Because they can't help it, miss," replied the girl, "the reason's plain." (If Miss Squeers were the reason, it was very plain.)

The denouement of this boyish interpolation is replaced by a more subtle metaphorical technique in OMF:

"Of course I could believe, Alfred," said Mrs Lammle, "anything you told me." How delightful these interchanges and the looks accompanying them! Now if the skeleton upstairs had taken that opportunity, for instance, of calling out "Here I am, suffocating in the closet!"

The building of irony upon irony is very similar, but the skeleton metaphor, Dickens' way of externalising the subconscious minds of the Lammles, is as sinister as anything in Edgar Allan Poe and an indication of a more complex imaginative organisation than Dickens' simple "shout from the wings" in NN. The dramatic techniques, however, are unchanged:

There was a mirror on the wall before them, and her eyes just caught him smirking in it. She gave the reflected image a look of the deepest disdain, and the image received it in the glass. Next moment they had quietly eyed each other, as if they, the principles, had had no part in the transaction.

Again the inner worlds of two-dimensional characters are dramatised for the audience. There follows a piece of more conventional character analysis which at first sight seems no different from the postscript to the

Fanny Squeers scene. There is, however, a notable lack of the crude savagery displayed there. Instead Dickens attempts simply an explanation of conduct. Judgement is implicit, but seems to interest Dickens less than the motives behind behaviour: "It may be that Mrs Lammle tried in some manner to excuse her conduct to herself by depreciating the poor little victim . . ." It is a more mature, more controlled Dickens--but there is no real change in technique, nor any significantly deeper insight into character and one misses the gusto and venom of the earlier scene. The greater complexity and satisfaction of the Lammles scene is largely due to the greater complexity of language and the increased sense because of it of the presence within the scene of different views of the world.

In four later chapters I will look more closely at the similarities and significant differences between the two novels, from the point of view of plot, character, influence of melodrama and finally of style. I will be attempting to build up a picture of how exactly the author developed and how a distinction seems to arise in his work between the early "theatrical" and the later "poetic."

CHAPTER II

"CHARACTER THROUGH EXTERNALS"?

And indeed, if Mrs Tow-wouse had given no utterance to the sweetness of her temper, Nature had taken such pains in her countenance, that Hogarth himself never gave more expression to a picture . . .¹

Mr Squeers' appearance was not prepossessing. He had but one eye, and the popular prejudice runs in favour of two . . .²

Hogarth gave Dickens his visual bearings in looking at the human body . . .³

The descriptions of Mrs Tow-wouse and Mr Squeers display all the obvious links between Dickens' and Fielding's character-drawing and hint also at their debt to Hogarth. I feel, however, that the debt to Hogarth can be misleadingly interpreted in Dickens' case, to widen the gulf between the early "graphic" and the later "psychological" novels. I intend to examine the extent of the debt and to show how the phrase "character through externals" should be applied to all of Dickens' work.

The influence of Hogarth extends in early Dickens not only to individual grotesques like Squeers but to scene-painting. The first picture of Dotheboys Hall in Chapter Eight of NN, for example, is like a discussion

of a Hogarth painting. John Harvey goes so far as to say that Hogarth "gave Dickens his visual bearings in looking at the human body, and in particular at the human face" because "for the young man who, in the 1830's, might aspire to be a dramatic-poet-genius handling the whole of human life, there were two towering examples of achievement: Shakespeare, and after him, Hogarth."⁴

Fielding, and Dickens in his early novels, tend to acknowledge a debt to Hogarth only in the occasional grotesque set-piece. Fielding presents a portrait of a character like Mrs Tow-wouse as a single event in the entertainment. After the description, he seldom alludes to the physical details again. Dickens in NN tends to work in much the same way. After the initial description, Squeers' idiosyncrasies tend to the verbal rather than the visual: after the discovery of the runaway Smike, "'lift him out!' said Squeers, after he had literally feasted his eyes . . . on the culprit."⁵ Horribly effective as the scene is, with the notion of the schoolmaster devouring the boy, it shows in the forgetful use of "eyes" instead of "eye" that Dickens' visual imagination is less important here than verbal dexterity. Squeers remains only a vague presence to the reader's eye throughout the scene. He has "a diabolical grin," he glowers at Nicholas "with his eyes sticking out of his head"; visually he might be a crudely drawn morality play devil. Only in his speech does he blossom into a

full character, for example, when, in wielding the cane over the innocent Smike, he remarks to his wife, with his usual incongruous deference to that exemplary woman, "Stand a little out of the way, my dear; I've hardly got room enough." Dickens' chief use of the visual is as an aid in narration, for quick identification of character, for example, when Squeers makes his longed-for reappearance in Chapter Thirty-Four of NN: ". . . the unlooked-for entrance of a third party . . . who, bringing his one eye (for he had but one) to bear on Ralph Nickleby, made a great many shambling bows." This is really more of a theatrical than a graphic technique, intended to surprise the audience, as the familiar grimace appears, into boos and jeers. Dickens is quite as likely to identify a character, particularly in the later novels when idiolect is more developed, by a quirk of speech. The unsavoury character Headstone meets outside Eugene's office in his pursuit of Lizzie is revealed as Riderhood as soon as he mentions "'T'other Governor.'" ⁶

When they do use graphic description both Fielding and Dickens stay at a very simple level, quite different from Hogarth's complexity. Certain features are accepted in Western society as typically evil and Fielding merely lists them to describe the essence of Mrs Tow-wouse: crooked figure, low forehead, shrivelled lips, "small red eyes." In the portrait of Squeers,

Dickens plays on the same characteristics to produce the same effect: ugly eye, wrinkled face, low, protruding forehead. Descriptions of heroes and heroines similarly operate within their own set of conventions, all conforming to Hogarth's dictum that "the face is the index of the mind . . . It is reasonable to believe that aspect to be a true and legible representation of the mind which gives everyone the same idea at first sight."⁷

This is the technique of the visual artist and ultimately has only a peripheral place in literature. Squeers exists essentially in words: in his massacre of the English language in the philosophy lesson with the little boys; in the zestful expression of his cruelty, ("I never thrashed a boy in a hackney-carriage before," said Mr Squeers, when he stopped to rest. 'There's inconveniency in it, but the novelty gives a sort of relish too!')⁸; in the philosophical use of abstract nouns to which his scholastic mind is given: "Here's richness!"--of the starving boys' milk-and-water; "Here's firmness! Here's solidness! Why, you can hardly get enough of him between your finger and thumb to pinch him anywheres!"--of Master Wackford; "'Look at them tears, Sir,' said Squeers with a triumphant air, as Master Wackford wiped his eyes with the cuff of his jacket, 'there's oiliness!'"⁹; most of all Squeers reveals his full humanity in his (quite literal) love of the flesh: "'Here's flesh!' cried Squeers, turning

the boy about, and indenting the plumpest parts of his figure with divers pokes and punches . . ."; "Mr Squeers sat himself down on the opposite seat from the unfortunate Smike . . . 'It isn't a dream!' said Squeers, 'That's real flesh and blood! I know the feel of it!'"¹⁰

Squeers is a purely linguistic creation and could never be part of Hogarth's world, with its fine distinction between "character" and "caricature," its meticulous concern for detail and for "realism" and its central interest in the development, or more usually the decline of individuals. Despite obvious Hogarthian traces elsewhere in his novels, for example in the early descriptions, I doubt very much the depth of Hogarth's influence on Dickens' sense of character. Hogarth, in spite of his genius, would have been as inadequate an illustrator of Dickens as Marcus Stone or Luke Fildes were. Phiz's magnificent Quilp in the original edition of The Old Curiosity Shop is replaced by a nullity in the hands of the realistic illustrator of the "Household" edition of the '60s. In the same way, Hogarth's world, though infinitely greater than anything the 1860s' illustrators could have produced, is in one way too small to hold a Dickens character. The difference is pinpointed in the unhelpful eighteenth century distinction between "character" and "caricature," which is unfortunately still current today and seems to me to illustrate the dangers of lifting vocabulary from one

art form to another. Fielding's theories in the Preface to Joseph Andrews show the beginning of the application of the distinction to literature:

Indeed no two species of writing can differ more widely than the comic and the burlesque: for as the latter is ever the exhibition of what is monstrous and unnatural, . . . so in the former we should confine ourselves strictly to Nature, from the just imitation of which will flow all the pleasure we can this way convey to the sensible reader.

His source is Hogarth:

There are hardly any two things more essentially different than character and caricature, nevertheless they are usually confounded and mistaken for each other . . . It has ever been allowed that when a character is strongly marked in the living face, it may be considered as an index of the mind, to express which with any degree of justness in painting requires the utmost efforts of a great master.¹¹

John Harvey is at pains to point out that Dickens almost stooped to caricature in his early novels--Mr Weller's corpulence he believes is just beyond the credulity of medical scientists--but that in the later novels his exaggeration has become "the artist's legitimate delight in noticing and isolating the distinctive feature" and he no longer distorts, but presents reality "through the elaborate play of far-fetched comparisons."¹² It seems to me that Dickens' conception of what people are and what they look like remained much the same throughout his career while the vision he presents in his novels is as fictive and therefore as removed from real life as that of any other creative artist. To

equate realism, as Mr Harvey seems to do, with accurate reporting, is to remove the term even further from application to Dickens' work. Certainly in the later novels there is usually one point to be made about a character through "isolating the distinctive feature" and because characters can be more subtly presented by means of "far-flung comparisons," more complex personalities can be created. In general the main development seems to be a greater discipline and a more sustained use of metaphor. When Dickens looked at Squeers, he noticed in passing a resemblance between the one grey-green eye and "the fanlight of a street door"; when he describes Mr Bounderby in the opening paragraphs of Hard Times, the essence of the character is trapped in the metaphor:

The emphasis was helped by the speaker's square wall of a forehead, which had his eyebrows for its base, while his eyes found commodious cellarage in two dark caves, overshadowed by the wall . . . the emphasis was helped by the speaker's hair, which bristled on the skirts of his bald head, a plantation of firs to keep the wind from its shiny surface . . . as if the head had scarcely warehouse-room for all the hard facts stored inside.

Dickens here is attempting to say something more complicated than his description of Squeers' evil nature, and he needs, and has at his disposal, a more complex language involving the sustained development of a metaphor; he can enact through language the uncompromising, single-minded nature of the man. The use of repetition

and of the metaphor of a crude building are not merely incidental: they contribute to the delineation of this particular character, whereas in the Squeers' description the language could only give a generalised picture of evil. The inventory structure is used in both cases, but here the approach is more obviously poetic, depending on analogy and image rather than on straightforward visual clues, to suggest character.

In OMF this technique reaches its most disciplined and controlled expression. In NN the action is separated from the character-drawing, in the manner of Fielding. A figure is frozen in some characteristic pose while the author's eye roams lengthily over it. Mr Cheeryble

stood, looking a little upward, with a hand thrust into the breast of his coat, and the other playing with his old-fashioned watch-chain: his head a little on one side, and his hat a little more on one side than his head . . . with such a pleasant smile playing about his mouth¹³

All that one gleans from the lengthy description is that Mr Cheeryble is a type of goodness and that goodness seems necessarily to be oldfashioned. That is all that Dickens wants to say and probably any more complex statement would have been beyond his linguistic range when he wrote NN. There is a great deal of the static quality of allegory in this novel, the simple juxtaposition of good and evil, with the "action" being in the reader's mind as he adheres to one and rejects the other. In case he needs prompting, Dickens appends the

moral to adorn the tale at the end of the Cheeryble chapter: "In short, the poor Nicklebys were social and happy, while the rich Nickleby was alone and miserable."

In OMF much more can be said in fewer words, without the moralist's appendix and with character and action united. The leisurely examination of physical detail, which gives the surrealist vividness of Pre-Raphaelite painting, has grown into an approach much more akin to Impressionism. At the Veneering dinner party characters are glanced at in passing through the mirror which

reflects Mr Podsnap . . . prosperously feeding, two little light-coloured wings, one on either side of his else bald head, looking as like his hair brushes as his hair, dissolving view of red beads on his forehead . . . Reflects Mrs Podsnap; fine woman for Professor Owen, quantity of bone, neck and nostrils like a rocking-horse, hard features, majestic headdress in which Podsnap has hung gold offerings.¹⁴

The inventory approach has gone. "He was a sturdy old fellow in a broad-skirted blue coat, . . . his legs, clothed in drab breeches and high gaiters . . . his head protected by a low-crowned broad-brimmed hat"--the phrases seem to belong to another writer. There is no leisure to stop to examine, for narrator and reader are involved by the language in the action. Only the salient features are mentioned and the result is therefore more genuinely visual. Even the transferred epithet--"a dissolving view" of beads of sweat--is an accurate

impression of the reader's own vision as he stands dazzled amid all the faces and reflected glitter. The Podsnaps' essential non-humanity is revealed beneath the conformity of their actions by language. Podsnap does not "eat", like normal humanity, he "feeds" and the single word traps him in the image of a corpulent wirey-winged horse from some grotesque fairy-tale; his wife is scarcely animate, let alone human, and becomes through the condemnation of language a mere recipient of Podsnap's gold offerings. No words denoting normal human relationships are used about the Podsnaps. He does not "give" gifts to her; he can only "hang . . . offerings." As a self-made man who worships his creator, he sees her as an embodiment of his own power and bows down before her and it.

Certainly the language reveals far more than in NN--yet this is, even more than the other, "character through externals." These characters are presented as a row of hard exteriors; they bump against one another rather than meet. Their inner life is presented, just as in NN but again with greater complexity, through their own use of language. Mr Podsnap declares that his wife "will be so glad of the opportunity" to meet the Veneerings and "in his fatal freshness he seems to find perpetual verdure and eternal youth in the phrase."¹⁵ Society is dying of overworn clichés and the strangling of real feeling and Podsnap's "freshness"

is as false as Lady Tippins'. In his feeding on the dry chaff of conventional language and mistaking it for "perpetual verdure" he is fatal to society. He is perfectly at home in the emotional barrenness of the times, whereas Twemlow is obviously unable to stomach new habits of speech and cannot understand the lack of meaning in phrases like "oldest and dearest friend." Podsnap's image of himself emerges in conflict with the image he presents to the narrator in a single phrase, "Prosperously feeding." The adverb suggests his own impression of his role, the participle the betraying acuteness of the omniscient narrator. Thus the inner life of the man is externalised in just the same way as Mr Squeers reveals his preoccupations in the glut of fleshy images which surround him.

The Theatrical element in Dickens' presentation of character--the use of mannerism and gesture and of soliloquy--is not simply a chance continuance of the "stagey" quality Dickens had admired in the theatre--it is a coherent part of his external approach to character. In NN, mannerisms seem to be doled out to the characters haphazardly, for entertainment value, as the last resort of the inexperienced producer. Newman Noggs, for example,

rubbed his hands slowly over each other:
cracking the joints of his fingers and
squeezing them into all possible distortions. The incessant performance of this routine on every occasion, and the communi-

cation of a fixed and rigid look to his unaffected eye, . . . were two among the numerous peculiarities of Mr Noggs, which struck an inexperienced observer at first sight.¹⁶

Dickens shares with us, the readers, the position of "inexperienced observer." He seems to know little more of his characters than can be gleaned from surface impressions. He has thought no further about them. In OMF, however, with the same technique of describing mannerisms, he can make a whole inner world:

"I don't wish to know about it; I don't choose to discuss it; I don't admit it." Mr Podsnap had even acquired a peculiar flourish of his right arm in often clearing the world of its most difficult problems, by sweeping them behind him . . . the world got up at eight, shaved close at quarter past, breakfasted at nine, went to the City at ten, came home at half-past-five, and dined at seven.¹⁷

Here is the whole paraphernalia of Mr Podsnap's inner life presented as it might be presented on stage. There are hints of such an inner life in Newman Noggs too--particularly in his meditations, like those of Jenny Wren, that other good eccentric, on punishments for those who oppress him:

the soliloquy referred, as Newman's grumbling soliloquies usually did, to Ralph Nickleby. "I don't believe he ever had an appetite," said Newman, "except for pounds, shillings and pence, and with them he's as greedy as a wolf. I should like to have him compelled to swallow one of every English coin. The penny would be an awkward morsel, but the crown--ha ha!"¹⁸

Jenny Wren too externalises her inner world in rhetorical

rhapsodies, usually with one character present but essentially in a soliloquising spirit. Again the same methods in OMF yield fuller results. Jenny's mannerisms, for example, are not arbitrary, as Newman's seem to be, but reveal various facets of her character--the stabbing in the air with her needle as she attacks untruth or hypocrisy, the hitch of the eyes and the chin as she adopts her worldly, shrewish air to protect herself from the world, the showering down of her golden hair on her shoulders as she retreats into the shelter of her exalted visions of the angelic children, are not idly chosen, but are the inventions of a maturer craftsman than the author of the posturings and posings of characters in NN. The process can be seen in the description of a single action: Lord Frederick Verisopht shares with George Sampson, the suitor of Bella and Lavinia, the habit of sucking his cane: "Lord Frederick enjoyed unmolested the full flavour of . . . his cane."¹⁹ In his case, the cane remains a cane. In the case of George Sampson, whose heroic name shelters a mere babe bullied by the female Wilfers, Dickens notes a significant point about the cane: "He put the round head of his cane in his mouth like a stopper, when he sat down. As if he felt himself full to the throat with affronting sentiments."²⁰ The new role becomes a permanent metamorphosis, as when the Veneering's butler became the Analytical Chemist: on the two other occasions in the

chapter when the cane and its owner appear together, the metaphor takes over: "'Mr Sampson,' proclaimed Mrs Wilfer, seeing that young gentleman take his stopper out, and so darkly fixing him with her eyes that he put it in again . . ."; "he . . . jerked his stopper in again, with a sharpness that made his eyes water." The complete suppression of the unfortunate swain's independence and individuality by the viragos around him is accurately captured in the metaphor and there is the additional secondary image of the cane as a dummy used to quiet a troublesome but little-regarded child. Similar insights might have been made into Lord Frederick's character, but the language in the earlier novel had not yet developed the resources for that.

Dickens, despite his love of wordplay, always keeps the safe distance of the simile between fantasy and the novel's real world, in NN. The characters, as has often been noticed, self-consciously act out their roles. There is no better example than the Kenwigs scenes, some of the best in the novel. The "cast" is selected and introduced with a dramatist's eye to suitability:

The party was admirably selected. There were, first of all, Mr Kenwigs and Mrs Kenwigs and four olive Kenwigs who sat up to supper . . . Then there was a young lady who had made Mrs Kenwigs' dress . . . Then, to match the young lady, was a young man . . . To these were added a newly-married couple . . . and a sister of Mrs Kenwigs . . . and Mr Noggs, who was a genteel person to ask, because he had been a gentleman once.²¹

As in the Veneering's party there are makeweights, (there it was "two stuffed Buffers interposed between the rest of the company and possible accidents"), and also a quiet relic of an older time, Twemlow and Noggs being both sufficiently removed from the present to be allowed to interpret between reader and Society. Each character has a specific role to play and Mrs Kenwigs' performance is particularly outstanding, being designed to produce the effect announced at the beginning of the scene which is obligingly described by the omniscient narrator, but rather obviously springs from the imagination of Mrs Kenwigs herself: "Beautiful . . . Mrs Kenwigs looked when she was dressed . . . and so stately that you would have supposed she had a cook and housemaid at least, and nothing to do but order them about . . ." There is the same sly revelation of the character's own view of him/herself as in the description of Mr Podsnap as "Prosperously feeding," and the same betrayal of the true state of things by the mischievous narrator. Mrs Kenwigs' performances as wife and mother are nevertheless superb and Dickens has the temerity to introduce a "real" actress into the scene to set them off:

"They are so beautiful!" said Mrs Kenwigs, sobbing.

"Oh dear," said all the ladies, "so they are! . . ."

"I cannot help it, and it don't signify," sobbed Mrs Kenwigs, "Oh! they're too beautiful to live, much too beautiful!"

On hearing this alarming presentment of their being doomed to an early death in the flower of their infancy, all four little girls raised a hideous cry, and burying their heads in their mother's lap simultaneously, screamed . . . Mrs Kenwigs meanwhile clasping them alternately to her bosom, with attitudes which Miss Petowker herself might have copied.

The other characters co-operate here and assume appropriate roles, and the presence of the "real" actress is a brilliant stroke, stressing the tenet of NN that the whole of life is role-play, whether on stage or off. People are judged and judge themselves, according to their appearance and their props and the dramatic need of the situation they are in. Mr Lillyvick is a case in point:

Now this was an interesting thing. Here was a collector of water-rates, without his book, without his pen-and-ink, without his double-knock, without his intimidation, kissing-- actually kissing--an agreeable female . . . the company looked on, quite absorbed in the sight.

Characters in NN are constantly acting out roles. It is a common-place of criticism to say so, and to conclude that this novel is an over-theatrical dead-end in Dickens' career. In fact throughout his career Dickens presents his characters rhetorically, building up their world through acting. There is no difference in kind between the role-play in NN and the role-play of, for example, Eugene and Mortimer in OMF. Mortimer, when Eugene is absent, noticeably acts his friend's role for him and when he is present resumes his habitual role as

a stable Horatio, helping his hero face the decay and corruption of the world. In the opening scene however, (Book I, Chapter ii) they perform a comic dialogue which protects their more serious selves against Society. Eugene so far is merely "gloomy" and Mortimer, as the mainstay of the act, is free to adopt the disarming, disclaiming, periphrastic style of his friend. Expressions like "she was secretly married to that popular character whom the novelists and versifiers call Another" and "We must now return, as the novelists say, and we wish they wouldn't, to the man from Somewhere" anticipate Eugene; they also illustrate Dickens' condemnation of the "romance" he had vindicated in NN.

"Romance" he now sees as a dangerous perversion of the reality of feeling and suffering, used by this corrupt Society as an elaborate fictional fodder to assuage the emotional hunger of their barren lives. The safety of the clearly-defined role-play of NN has broken down and people like Georgiana can be dragged completely into the perverted fairy-tale the Lammles and Veneerings create for them.

In the interview with Mr Boffin (Book I, Ch. viii), the falsity of Mortimer's language and therefore of the world he represents is glaringly apparent. As in all the genuine encounters, this is a purely linguistic confrontation; there is no need of authorial comment. Mr Boffin, the champion of the simple-hearted, which

in linguistic terms means of plain speech, is completely supported by his author; Lightwood, who "murmurs" and is all softness, further condemns himself by condescending to Mrs Boffin--"'Vigorous Saxon spirit--Mrs Boffin's ancestors--bowmen--Agincourt and Crecy.'" There are many such encounters in Dickens. Pip and Joe on the latter's visit to London in Great Expectations is a close example in terms of division of sympathy. In both cases the character who presents himself so badly is in the end redeemed. Dickens condemns snobbery, but understands it--perhaps from first hand--and in OMF he finally also comes to terms with his distaste for the fallen aristocracy. The sympathy was there already in NN. Lord Frederick Verisopht's vulnerable stupidity is merely pitiable and Dickens relents sufficiently to give him "a good funeral" (Chapter 50). Cleverness alone, on the other hand, he distrusts, and condemns. Carker and Captain Cuttle in Dombey and Son are a typical confrontation of evil intelligence and slow goodness. There is no division of sympathies there. Mortimer and Eugene suffer under the double Dickensian disadvantage of being both aristocratic and clever and it is a sign of Dickens' maturity and greater range of sympathy that he should comprehend and present so fairly the forces which moulded them. Their personae, he implies, are defences against Society rather than a commitment to it, for when the two are alone Mortimer

at least speaks in quite a different style and in fact adopts the simple "language of the heart" of Dickens' good characters: "'Ah, Eugene!'" said Lightwood affectionately, . . . 'I would that you answered my three questions! What is to come of it? What are you doing? Where are you going?'"²² On this occasion he achieves the highest praise of being referred to by the narrator as "earnest" and "serious" and his earlier role-play is explained away: "Despite that pernicious assumption of lassitude and indifference, which had become his second nature, he was strongly attached to his friend. He had founded himself on Eugene when they were yet boys at school." Eugene in this encounter adopts Mortimer's former speech style, revealed now as his own: "'In this desire for earnestness,' murmured Eugene, with the air of one who was meditating deeply, 'I trace the influence of the little flour-barrel and the coffee-mill. Gratifying.'" Eugene is thus revealed linguistically as the centre of interest. His path to salvation is marked by the transformation of his flippant style into something approaching earnestness. In the interview with Lizzie before the attack (IV, vi), he moves in consecutive speeches from sceptical word-play to something approaching serious rhetoric:

"In the name of all that's good--and that is not conjuring you in my own name--for Heaven knows I am not good--" said Eugene, "don't be distressed!"

"You don't know what my state of mind towards you is. You don't know how you haunt and bewilder me. You don't know how the cursed carelessness that is over-officious in helping me at every other turning of my life won't help me here. You have struck it dead, I think, and I sometimes wish you had struck me dead along with it."

There is no basic difference of technique between the role-play of Eugene and that which builds up the worlds of characters in NN. The difference is mainly in the choice of character. Nicholas is obviously the simplest choice of hero and his self-dramatisation involves merely the adoption of the language of the juvenile lead in contemporary melodrama. Eugene is a much more original and interesting case, but the roles Dickens has available for him (restricted as he is, by inclination and background, to the limited range of contemporary theatrical hero-figures) are very few. When he triumphs over his old role of witty sceptic he is liberated into the sunny uplands of romantic prose:

I will fight it out to the last gasp, with her and for her, in the open field. When I hide her, or strike for her, faint-heartedly, in a hole or a corner, do you whom I love next best upon earth, tell me what I shall most righteously deserve to be told--that she would have done well to turn me over with her foot that night when I lay bleeding to death, and to have spat upon my dastard face.²³

There is nothing essentially inconsistent in the use of this language, although it may seem a rather simplistic solution to the problems of Eugene, once it is acknowledged that his character, like all the others, has been

a performance from beginning to end. This is now the performance of the victorious romantic hero. Those who read the earlier Eugene as an inward psychological study are bound to be taken aback by this sudden regression--as they see it--to the world of NN. Dickens in fact always presents his characters through their performances in society and they are therefore all creatures of rhetoric. This is just as valid a convention--certainly as Shakespearian--as for example Virginia Woolf's imposition of continual self-analysis upon her characters, though both necessarily limit the range of characters it is possible for the author to explore. Presumably Virginia Woolf's method is not ideal for describing the inarticulate and uneducated, while Dickens could probably have presented Mrs Dalloway only in society and therefore as something of a social snob.

Characters in NN are constantly acting out roles. Everyone in OMF is busy creating worlds. The statements are closely linked and clarify the growth from one novel to the other. The shift of metaphor from the theatre to the world indicates the increasing range of Dickens' ability. In NN only occasionally is there a sense of the whole world of a character as opposed to his immediate role in a particular scene, while in OMF the novel is built up on the interacting worlds of Twemlow, the Veneerings, the creatures of Limehouse Hole and so on. Again, however, the difference is one of degree

rather than of kind. Everyone tries to cast himself in a role in NN, and those who cannot find a role are doomed to vanish from the story, as Smike does when he cannot be Kate's lover. Certain characters, Mr Crummles and Ralph in particular, act as producers and "cast" people for their own ends; even without their intervention, as at the Kenwigs' party, every group organises itself automatically into appropriate characters and foils and everyone comes in, like the sympathetic neighbours of Mrs Kenwigs, on cue. Crummles shows the process at its simplest:

"Excuse my saying so," said the manager,
 ". . . but what a capital countenance your
 friend has got! . . . without a pad upon his
 body and hardly a touch of paint upon his
 face, he'd make such an actor for the
 starved business as was never seen in this
 country!"

"You view him with a professional eye,"
 said Nicholas, laughing.²⁴

This is the beginning of the process of casting which continues more metaphorically in OMF. The Lammles in their gulling of Georgiana, for example, are imagined as holding a prompt-book with which they bully Fledgeby and Georgiana into sustaining their allotted parts (II, iv). Casting in NN is often deliberately stressed in this way to underline the romance-reality theme in the novel. At Ralph's dinner-party (Chapter XIX), for instance, someone is given a non-speaking part as "a makeweight" who "wasn't introduced at all." Ralph and Kate are the subjects of a particularly melodramatic

piece of casting. As they walk along together (Chapter X), Kate is seen as "the timid country girl" and Ralph as "stern and hard-featured" and their parts in the central morality of the novel are prepared for in a momentary transformation scene: "It would have been a stranger contrast still, to have read the hearts that were beating side by side; to have laid bare the gentle innocence of the one and the rugged villainy of the other."²⁵ Later Ralph is presented in a variety of roles: "Here, he was all softness and cringing civility . . . But in the poorer habitations Ralph was another man . . . With another class of customers, Ralph was again another man";²⁶ the subtle adaptable money-lender part is dropped towards the end of the story; the wit, the taciturnity, the intelligence vanish and Ralph has only to rant and rave and be a villain, for that is all that the story needs at this point: "Lie on . . . with your iron tongue . . . No bell or book for me! Throw me on a dunghill! . . ."²⁷

So far there seems to be a simple expediency in the casting of NN; there are, however, the beginnings of the world-creating of OMF, particularly when one character imposes his world-view on another. Mrs Kenwigs invents her daughter Morleena's name and creates her in her own image; Mr Mantalini persuades his wife to act as his "little chickabiddy" and the importance of that role to him is shown on his last appearance, in the

penultimate chapter, when he is shown desperately attempting to cast another woman in the same part; the company at the Kenwigs' have invented a character for Mr Lillyvick, the water-rates collector, and are astonished when he breaks free of that role; the Cheeryble Brothers in their deadly innocence have their own image of Tim Linkinwater; Mrs Wititterly builds around her, from unpromising material, the world she wants to adorn, going so far as to rename her little pageboy "Alphonse"; at the Employment Agency, those in search of work seem to dress up to fit the desired role, like the "half-dozen strong young women, each with pattens and an umbrella," who seem to be auditioning to be maids-of-all-work. Nicholas particularly builds his own romance and imposes it on the "real" world of the novel:

"To be sure, I see it all," said poor Nicholas, delighted with a thousand visionary ideas, ". . . or suppose some young nobleman who is being educated at the Hall were to take a fancy to me, and get his father to appoint me his travelling tutor . . ."

"Ah, to be sure!" sneered Ralph.

"And who knows, but when he came to see me . . . he might fall in love with Kate, who would be keeping my house, and--and--marry her, eh! uncle? Who knows?"

"Who indeed!" snarled Ralph.²⁸

Nicholas' sanguine world is imposing itself on the novel, but there is always Ralph or the omniscient narrator on hand to point out that there is a real world, independent of the desires of the characters. In NN the only completely whole world-view is Mrs Nickleby's. No

disparagement can affect her certainty; she is unassailable by logic, by the evidence of her senses or the comments of her children. Mrs Nickleby's sublime inconsequence establishes the logic of her own world-view. Hers is a world where Ralph is a benevolent benefactor, Nicholas and Kate are supremely successful, Smike is a polite young gentleman--and where the throwing of cucumbers over the garden wall is a delicate display of admiration. It is a sunny extravagant world, though occasionally Dickens indulges in the wild irony of Jane Austen's descriptions of Mrs Bennett, providing, as she does, a wise daughter for a foil:

"They are very superior people, evidently," said Mrs Nickleby, as she took her daughter's arm. "What a superior person Mrs Wititterly is!"

"Do you think so, mamma?" was all Kate's reply. "Why, who can help thinking so, my love?" rejoined her mother. "She is pale enough and looks much exhausted. I hope she may not be wearing herself out, but I am very much afraid."²⁹

The success of Mrs Nickleby as a character is one of those splashes of brilliance which characterise NN. One can almost see the idea of her personality taking hold of Dickens' imagination from her first rather stilted scene, and more and subtler humorous possibilities occurring to him. In OMF there is much more thorough planning of character--perhaps one reason why Henry James found it "so intensely written"³⁰--and yet the presentation of Jenny Wren, for example, is essen-

tially unchanged. It depends just as much as before on mannerism, idiolect and a "poetic-dramatic" interpretation of the character's world.

Jenny Wren is introduced (II, i) through the unsympathetic eyes of Bradley Headstone as "a child--a dwarf--a girl--a something." The description is reminiscent of that which introduces Little Dorrit and in fact there are some shared characteristics, Jenny's shrewish qualities revealing perhaps a braver confrontation by Dickens of the warping nature of a hard childhood. (Such a confession could only happen in a secondary character, however. Lizzie Hexam's purity at the centre of the novel maintains the essential allegory unbroken.) The appellations used for Jenny reflect on the characters who use them. Headstone calls her "child," a role he understands well, and only later in the scene, when she has established herself, does the narrator accept her on her own valuation as "dolls' dressmaker" and "the person of the house." In her first words Jenny introduces two of her three catchphrases: "'I can't get up,' said the child, 'because my back's bad and my legs are queer. But I am the person of the house.'" The phrases, as the backbone of Jenny's idiolect, are established very firmly in this first scene, the first occurring three times, and the second, five, two of these being references by the sympathetic narrator. The third--"I know your tricks and your manners"--occurs a little later in

the scene, applied to other children (thus reinforcing Jenny's uniqueness) and reappears three times. The mannerisms of sharpness of glance, the "hitch" of the eyes and the chin, and the shake of the fist all occur, as does the very Lewis Carroll-ish punishment theme:

"'. . . and through the keyhole, I'd blow in pepper.'

'What would be the good of pepper?' 'To set 'em sneezing.'" Jenny Wren is no sentimentalised type "for the pathetic business," as Mr. Crummles might say.

Despite Dickens' absorption in what makes people what they are, evinced in for example his comments on Hogarth's "Gin Lane,"³¹ he deals with Jenny's background economically and her relation to it is described through a subtle linguistic device: "The dolls' dressmaker had become a little quaint shrew; of the world, worldly; of the earth, earthy." In the same way, Little Dorrit's brother is captured in the move from noun to adjective. He is "of the prison, prisonous and of the streets, streety."³²

Having established the character securely, Dickens can now use her as a foil, but she comes into her own again in two final serious contexts, the death of her father (IV, ix) and the near-death of Eugene (IV, x). In NN a serious scene was strictly separated from a humorous one and quite a different register of speech was used. Characters who expressed themselves through idiolect, like Mrs Nickleby, inhabited a different world

from those in the serious parts of the story, who spoke, like Ralph at his death, in the rhetoric of melodrama. In OMF Dickens contrives to weld comedy and tragedy, sometimes achieving only pathos and sometimes something deeper. Jenny does not lose her idiolect in her serious scenes and in her requiem for her father (Page 693) the familiarity of her phrases increases the poignancy of the moment. She is not alienated from the reader by newly-imposed rhetoric.

What is important about the handling of Jenny Wren is the experienced economy of the theatrical technique and the exploitation of this "external" mode of description to build up the world of a character. Jenny "had her personal vanities, happily for her" (II, ii), but more than that, she had created order out of her sadly disordered world. Her choice of name for herself reinforced her industrious role; she had placed her father in the only role he could cope with, that of "troublesome child," and throughout the novel she draws people into her good fairytale world. "Come up and be dead . . ." she calls to Riah and to Lizzie, making Dickens' allegory very visual and physically present. He "slips without difficulty into a medieval mode of visual imagining" says John Harvey³³ and certainly in OMF the worlds of the characters are almost geographically polarised between Jenny's roof-top and the slimy river-bed where Riderhood exists, just as in a medieval

Morality there is a visible Heaven and Hell. Jenny draws Riah into her world, first as "Godmother," then as Wolf, then reclaimed as "Godmother" again; Fledgeby is a fox to her, Abbey Potterson merely an "old lady" and even the wealthy ladies are drawn in and imagined as working for Jenny's dolls. In the background is the unoccupied role of the Suitor, filled perhaps by the prince-in-disguise, Sloppy, whom Jenny sees as the "Giant" (IV, xvi). There are several "Transformation scenes" involving Riah, Mr Boffin and the Lammles as well as John Harmon. As Edgar in King Lear doffs his own role to become stage madman, and Kent doffs his to become servant, so Dickens' characters in NN and OMF assume, refuse, or change their roles, either by literal disguising or by presenting different performances to the other characters.

In OMF the characters impose not just one role but a world upon the novel. Lady Tippins' "grisly fiction" of her lovers turns Society into a warped and superannuated romance. At the Lammles' wedding, the whole scene is re-interpreted through Lady Tippins' eyes, or rather eyeglass: "Bride, five-and-forty if a day, thirty shillings a yard, veil fifteen pounds, pocket-handkerchief a present. Bridesmaids, kept down for fear of out-shining the bride, consequently not girls, twelve-and-six a yard."³⁴ The Inspector is the "quiet Abbot of that Monastery" (I, iii); in the midst of the

horror of his job, he lives in a metaphorical world of his own: fishing for Headstone's body, "was an awful sort of fishing, but it no more disconcerted Mr Inspector than if he had been fishing in a punt on a summer evening by a soothing weir up the peaceful river"--a subtle prophesy of the fishing for bodies which did take place up at Plashwater lock when the Harmon Murder carried its polluting influence that far up the "peaceful river." Almost everyone in the novel is linked to an identifying metaphor and comes as it were to inhabit the world that metaphor creates. Jenny Wren creates a fairytale about her, Mr Podsnap lives in a world which is solid, wooden and prosperous, Mr Boffin scatters golden dust on his way. The process is perhaps most succinct in Little Dorrit, when Pancks not only becomes a tug, but literally draws Mr Casby into the metaphor too as the heavy immobile Patriarch. The limits of the metaphor are a reminder of the limits of each character's vision of the world. Miss Peecher cannot help Headstone, for "more was amiss with him than Miss Peecher's simply arranged little work-box of thoughts, fitted with no recesses, could hold."³⁵ Even Gruff'n' Glum, christened by the narrator at Bella's wedding, has his own limited way of interpreting the world, "though most events acted on him simply as tobacco stoppers, pressing down and condensing the quids with-

in him."³⁶ Abbey Potterson has created a world out of the "Six Jolly Fellowship Porters" and is found "seated in state on her snug throne" amid "the glories of the bar."³⁷ Perhaps best of all, Mrs Wilfer in her military might unrolls the ringing plains of windy Troy over her sitting-room carpet and summons others to join her in battle. Her conversations, as in II, viii, are described in military terms, with Lavinia frequently deserting to the enemy, Mrs Wilfer "courteously receiving the deserter" and the unfortunate George Sampson invariably being born away, "a grateful captive" (as he appears in the visit to John and Bella, IV, xvi). Dickens displays the same relish and dexterity with the mock-heroic here as does Fielding in Molly Seagrim's "battle" in Tom Jones, but his use of metaphor is not, like Fielding's, a single incident in the novel, but intrinsic to it. Twemlow, too shy to realise his own potentially heroic qualities, which emerge in the "combat" in the final chapter, has the narrator's help in building up his role. "The chivalrous Twemlow, knight of the Simple Heart" is in Society condemned into a "passage through the world by such narrow little dimly-lighted ways, and picking up so few specks or spots on the road."³⁸ At the same time there is the suggestion that we dare not rely even on his world-view as the real one: "Twemlow has before noticed in his feeble way how soon the Veneering guests become

infected with the Veneering fiction. Not, however, that he has the least notion of its being his own case."³⁹

The suggestion that Veneering's world is an infection links it with the pollution of the Harmon murder and reveals the rottenness at the heart of Society. Dickens' irony also destroys another apparently still point in a turning world. If Twemlow too is "infected" against his will or knowledge, who is there to present the true picture?

In NN characters consciously act out their roles. The mask is put on, as it were, with theatrical relish. In OMF the division between romance and reality has broken down and one cannot tell where one ends and the other begins. Simile has become metaphor. There are no revelations of secret inner personalities any more than in NN, but they were never expected or hinted at in the earlier novel whereas here, occasionally, a character like Eugene (II, xv) is followed a little way off-stage--only to confirm that, like the rest, he is essentially a rhetorical creation and can speak only in dramatic soliloquy:

Now that his part was played out for the evening and when, in turning his back upon the Jew, he came off the stage, he was thoughtful himself. "How did Lightwood's catechism run?" he murmured . . . "What is to come of it? What are you doing? Where are you going? We shall soon know now. Ah!" with a heavy sigh.

The mask of character is never removed. Mr Boffin's

miser role is as real while it lasts as Edgar's Fool and he too goes on acting off-stage: "It was a cunning and suspicious idea, in the way of his school of Misers and he looked very cunning and suspicious as he went, jogging through the streets."⁴⁰ There are never two levels of consciousness in Dickens. Appearances are all and so Mr Boffin the Miser is as real to us as Mr Boffin the simple soul. When he removes the first mask, it is only to reveal the original one. "No man knows till the time comes what depths are within him!" says Bradley Headstone (II, xv), leading critics to assume that Dickens was, in OMF, interested for almost the first time in an inward, psychological approach to character. The language reveals the truth. When Headstone gives vent to "the depths within him" it is in theatrical rhetoric. The tension in his character is presented theatrically in the contrast between his respectable, subdued appearance and the vigour of his speech. "I know less about myself than about most people in the world" says Eugene (II, vi) and again critics assume that here too is a "fully rounded" character capable of introspection. Yet what Eugene finds at the end of the novel is not self-knowledge but marriage and a new role and with the attainment of this role he is released from his old style into a romantic prose as rhetorical as anything in NN. Eugene's progress is marked by external, not internal, struggles--with

Lizzie, with Headstone, with death; there is no self-discovery at all.

Once the consistency of the poetic-dramatic approach is acknowledged, it is obvious that OMF may be a very considerable progression from NN but is not a diversion into another genre. In both novels the paraphernalia of props, scenery and costumes are used as a means of character individuation and I would like finally to compare the nature of their use to illustrate where I think Dickens' development lay.

Sir Mulberry Hawk and Lord Frederick Verisopht in their "handsome suite of private apartments" (Chapter 26) are on stage and Dickens is still involved, like Richardson in several scenes in Clarissa, in transcribing drama rather than in evolving an essentially novelistic mode of description. The opening of the chapter is a scene-setting pure and simple. Writing as "the novel" was still inchoate, Dickens has no compunction in borrowing wholesale from the theatre and, not being so naive as critics who think him oblivious of his own actions, makes a point of the similarities:

The place was a handsome suite of private apartments in Regent Street; the time was three o'clock in the afternoon; the persons were Lord Frederick and his friend Sir Mulberry . . . these distinguished gentlemen were reclining listlessly on a couple of sofas, with a table between them . . . Newspapers lay strewn around the room.

There follows a list of props: "A couple of billiard balls all mud and dirt, two battered hats, a champagne bottle . . . a broken cane; a card-case without a top; an empty purse; a watchguard snapped asunder . . ."

Dickens always loves lists as a means of creating atmosphere and he uses detail as Hogarth does; but it is as yet simply significant detail; these objects are labelled "tokens of riot and disorder"--NN is far from the emblematic world of OMF, the world of the Analytical Chemist and the Golden Dustman, although its beginnings are evident in the shrivelled tree outside Ralph's office, emblem of the wasted hopes of life in the City, and in the haze surrounding money and those who pursue it.

This transcription of a dramatic sketch, in which even the conversation is set up as a dialogue, can be compared with the world of the idle aristocrats in OMF (I, vi). The setting here is much more closely related to the characters and is seen through their eyes. It is much more obviously part of a novel:

His friend, lying back in his easy chair, watched him lying back in his easy chair as he stretched out his legs on the hearth-rug . . . with the amused look that Eugene Wrayburn could always awaken in him without seeming to try or care.

The description is completely subjective:

A dungeon-like outer door . . . the complexion of the tables and chairs was, like Lady Tippins' a little too blooming to be believed in . . . the carpets and floorcloth seemed to rush at the beholder's face in the unusual prominence of their patterns.

The impressionist view is Dickens' mature way of creating a world for his characters. He captures their own fears and dislikes through choice of external detail: "The Temple, accustomed to tone down both the still life and the human life that has too much to do with it, would soon get the better of all that." In such details we are shown the struggle implicit in Eugene's surname--the struggle to maintain a ray of hope in a stifling moribund Society. Dickens' preoccupation with names has not changed very much from "Verisopht" and "Hawk" to "Lightwood" and "Wrayburn," except that there is a more emblematic and less obvious Jonsonian quality about the latter; and he is still fond of using lists of objects to create atmosphere: "'See!' said Eugene, 'miniature flour-barrel, rolling-pin, spice-box, shelf of brown jars, chopping-board, coffee-mill, dresser elegantly furnished with crockery'" The difference is in the characters' new awareness of their environment and of its influence on them: "'The moral influence of these objects'" [continues Eugene], "'in forming the domestic virtues, may have an immense influence upon me; not upon you, for you are a hopeless case, but upon me.'"

Against the quasi-religious belief in the unassailability of goodness (represented for example by the flawless speech of Oliver Twist), Dickens always set many examples of the influence of environment on character. In the early novels the morality theme works

independently of the theme restlessly propounded through the secondary characters, so that in NN Ralph, Kate and Nicholas show no evidence of any influence from their background and are static and allegorical figures, while Smike, the Infant Phenomenon and Verisopht witness strongly to the corruptibility of man on earth. In OMF the corresponding central trio, Headstone, Lizzie and Eugene, are integrated into the environment theme, not opposed to it--Lizzie offering an exceptional example rather than a separate religious hope--and the novel is as a result a more coherent statement. The influence of environment on character is a theme which demands a detailed account of the former. It is therefore no criticism nor an accusation of superficiality to say that Dickens describes character through externals: the props and scenery of life formed an important part of his theme. In both novels characters choose and build up roles for themselves and in OMF particularly the process is brilliantly externalised in the rearranging of the stage furniture, for in Dickens the "bare little room of a man's heart" is lavishly furnished with props. Mrs Boffin's decision to become a "high-flyer in Fashion" involves her building an elaborate scenario to support her:

Facing the fire between the settle, a sofa, a footstool and a little table formed a centre-piece devoted to Mrs Boffin. . . . there was a flowery carpet on the floor; but, instead of reaching the fireside, its glowing vegeta-

tion stopped short at Mrs Boffin's footstool, and gave place to a region of sand and saw-dust.⁴¹

Thus Dickens externalises the process of self-definition. The characters' relationships too can best be described in terms of physical juxtaposition, as Mr Boffin explains:

So Mrs Boffin, she keeps up her part of the room in her way; I keep up my part of the room in mine If I get by degrees to be a highflyer at Fashion, then Mrs Boffin will by degrees come fr'arder. If Mrs Boffin should ever be less of a dab at Fashion than she is at the present time, then Mrs Boffin's carpet would go back'arder.

The process has begun in NN--for example in the cottage in which the "good" characters congregate (Chapter 35), which they build into a haven of romance against the reality of the world and into which they draw other good characters, Frank Cheeryble, Newman Noggs, Miss La Creevey--but in OMF, instead of a gradual physical polarisation of good and bad, there are individual characters building individual worlds for themselves. Silas Wegg's takeover of the London street corner is seen as the establishment of a Weggian empire: "He had established his right to the corner by imperceptible prescription. He had never varied his ground an inch" (I, v). Wegg, like Jenny Wren and so many other characters in Dickens' later novels, draws other characters into his world and recasts them:

He had not only settled it with himself in the course of time that he was errand-goer by

appointment to the house at the corner . . . but also that he was one of the house's retainers and owed vassalage to it . . . he knew so little about the inmates that he gave them names of his own invention, as "Miss Elizabeth," "Master George," "Aunt Jane," "Uncle Parker."

Buildings in Dickens are from the beginning a means of describing character through externals. He seems to feel like Hogarth, the "dumb rhetoric of scenery."⁴² In Dombey and Son and supremely in Little Dorrit, the symbol of a character trapped within a building as it is trapped within itself is created--but in NN there is already one complete development of the idea in an incidental fairy-tale image:

In an old house . . . which seemed to have withered like himself and to have grown yellow and shrivelled in hoarding him from the light of day, as he had in hoarding money, lived Arthur Gride. Meagre old chairs and tables, of spare and boney make, and hard and cold as a miser's hearts, were ranged in grim array . . . A tall grim clock upon the stairs, with long lean hands and famished face, ticked in cautious whispers . . . (Chapter 51).

This is simply a type, and Dickens' linguistic skill could scarcely have extended the method in NN to a complex character or situation. Other buildings in NN have a more interesting potential. The Manchester Buildings (Chapter 19) is a "sanctuary of smaller members of Parliament" and would surely have been developed in a later novel into an emblem of corrupt government, perhaps a variation on the Circumlocution Office. Dickens does sense the possibilities of the place but eventually finds

it easier to create Mr Gregsbury and use literary parody as his method of criticism, although within the description are several hints which seem about to develop: "there frown melancholy rows of bills, which say, as plainly as did the countenances of their occupiers, ranged on ministerial and opposition benches in the session which slumbers with its fathers, 'To Let, To Let.'" Dickens does not follow up the comparison, however, but is diverted into a description of the legislators who "swarm" in the house "in busier periods of the year." There is a suggestion here of parasites on a corpse, but the image does not develop and a new metaphor emerges as the passage ends:

Manchester Buildings is an eel-pot, which has no outlet but its awkward mouth--a case-bottle which has no thorough-fare, and a short and narrow neck;--in this respect it may be typical of some few among its more adventurous residents who, after wriggling themselves into Parliament by violent efforts and contortions, find that it is no thoroughfare for them.

It is a perfect image, but it is momentary and one need only consider the "Dismal Swamp" of OMF, around which all the evil in the novel flutters, from Fledgeby the horsefly to the amphibious creatures in Limehouse Hole, to realize how much more central and integrated are the images and the themes of the later novel.

Costume is the final overtly theatrical method of revealing character through externals and it can be illustrated briefly in a consideration of two descriptions

in NN. Miss Knag, we are told "wore clothes of a very youthful pattern and perhaps her feelings took the same shape."⁴³ Mrs Nickleby tries to change her role, when she becomes conscious of the attentions of her cucumber-throwing lover, by

gradually superadding to those staid and matronly habiliments . . . a variety of embellishments and decorations . . . her mourning garments assumed quite a new character. From being the outward tokens of respect and sorrow for the dead, they became converted into signals of a very slaughterous and killing designs upon the living.⁴⁴

Costume is used with less youthful enthusiasm in OMF, but Mrs Boffin's befeathered disguise as a "high-flyer in fashion" and Bella's self-conscious adoption of matronly garb after her marriage are examples of the continuance in Dickens' imagination of clothes to define roleplay.

Thus, although there is a more obviously theatrical idiom in NN, both novels are concerned with creating through externals the worlds of their characters. NN stops short at an assertion of the combined power of good over evil--the Morality play conclusion. OMF overtly makes the same assertion, but militating against it is the cynicism of the unreclaimed Eugene who analyses and examines and who might through cynicism rather than through the piety of his later self have been able to counter the corruption of Veneering's world. When critics like Angus Wilson defend Dickens, in my opinion

on the wrong grounds, by claiming that in the later novels he did succeed in creating a "developed character" (Wilson's phrase), they usually use Eugene as a prime example. Wilson seems to see him as Dickens' finally successful attempt at conforming to the George Eliot norm:

with Steerforth . . . we are at the beginning of all those twists and turns by which Dickens eventually transforms a rather stagey villain into a new sort of full-sized hero. From Steerforth to Eugene Wrayburn is the road to self-discovery.⁴⁵

Stephen Gill, editing OMF for the Penguin edition (1971) talks of the "inwardness of psychological exploration" in Bradley Headstone and Eugene. Dickens, he says, is very much concerned with the "depths" of the human personality in OMF, especially as revealed in "extreme and painful situations." Gill's uncomfortable reconciliation here, in that last rather forced sentence, of the psychological and the melodramatic reveals the schizophrenia inherent in this approach to Dickens. It seems to me that Dickens is never centrally concerned with the individual consciousness--that the growth of a single individual to "self-discovery"--is not within his range but neither does it engage his interest. David Copperfield and Great Expectations both have a central protagonist but in my opinion rather as an experiment in narrative technique than to propound a theme. The phrase "the Dickens World" expresses best where his

interests lay: in the complex study of individuals in society, involving questions such as "what formed them?", "why do they act or refuse to act as they do?", "why in particular do they choose or have chosen for them certain roles?". NN and OMF ask these questions in equally rhetorical ways, though in the first a dramatic idiom predominates, while in the second there is a more poetic involvement in imagery and symbols. Robert Garis, feeling unsatisfied with the critical treatment of Eugene, suggests that towards the end of his career Dickens tried to be less theatrical and implausible. Bella Wilfer, Arthur Clennam and Eugene Wrayburn are exceptions to his rule--but they are not natural to him, nor very successful.⁴⁶ I would disagree both with Angus Wilson's eulogy and with Robert Garis' dismissal; Eugene and Bella seem to me to be within Dickens' essentially rhetorical tradition of character-drawing and to represent the most complex achievements the tradition was capable of in his hands. Beside Nicholas Nickleby they may seem untheatrical--but they are in exactly the same mould: character shown from the outside, vagaries made into a sort of theatrical shorthand to identify them, dilemmas externalised and eventually resolved in dramatic action. Nicholas beats Squeers and Sir Mulberry Hawk, carries off Madeline Bray and finally confronts his uncle in a melodramatic exchange which is a battle with verbal clichés rather than weapons; similarly Eugene triumphs

over Headstone and over Society by means of a fight and a marriage rather than by introspection; he is described as Jenny Wren is by idiosyncracies of manner and speech; his character is established in his style of speech, his attitude to other characters by his casual nicknames-- "Mr Dolls," "MRF", "The Fair Tippins"--and he is identified theatrically by his posture: "Miss Wren was busy at her work by candlelight, and Mr Wrayburn . . . all idle and shiftless, stood by her bench, looking on" (Book III, Ch. x).

From the role-play of NN and the definition of character through props, scenery and costume, Dickens began to define character and to unify theme still using externals but with a technique less obviously theatrical and more that of the poet-dramatist. The later development is pinpointed in the vision given to Eugene in his first major appearance with Lightwood:

"If we were on an isolated rock in a stormy sea," said Eugene, smoking, with his eyes on the fire, "Lady Tippins couldn't put off to visit us, or, better still, might put off and be swamped. People couldn't ask one to wedding breakfasts. There would be no Precedents to hammer at, except the plain-sailing Precedent of keeping the light up. It would be exciting to look out for wrecks. . . . It would be a defined and limited monotony. It would not extend beyond two people." (I, xii).

Thus Dickens prefigures the role in the novel Eugene's surname suggests for him. Married to Lizzie, having opted for the "limited monotony" of two people,

he can watch Lady Tippins and the rest of Society being "swamped," sinking in fact into the Dismal Swamp. It is as if Lizzie looking into the glow of her fire and Eugene also looking, in this scene, into the flames, are externalising, almost personifying, the struggle for a new life in a dying society where the sun and the creatures dependant on it are "collapsing flat and cold" in to the swamp; they seem to be for their author harbingers of a new Golden Age. It is thus not through Hogarthian graphic detail at one end of his career and psychological analysis at the other that Dickens created his World: in NN and OMF he uses theatrical idiom, but increasingly presents character through language and imagery. It is difficult to write of his intentions without lapsing into a purple passage; exposition tends to take over from analysis. It is difficult in exactly the same way to interpret a poem or a Shakespeare play. Dickens makes no claim to the massive intelligence of a novelist of the George Eliot cast; he understands his characters as they act before him, not dissected like pinned butterflies by his probing imagination; and increasingly in his career he shows a poetic-dramatist's perception of characters and their worlds.

CHAPTER III

STRUCTURE: "ROTTEN ARCHITECTURE BUT
WONDERFUL GARGOYLES"?¹

The general idea of NN was that of attack against the cheap schools of Yorkshire The story expanded from this idea into the adventures of a young man during the first months when he started out in the world for himself.

OMF is an involved, loosely constructed story of London life, introducing three themes. The leading plot is that of a man supposed to be dead The second is the idle pursuit of a young woman by a man of superior station the third shows the mischief caused by two adventurers in society.²

To present-day readers the first synopsis, of NN, may seem largely to account for that book, while the second, of OMF, scarcely recalls our experience of it at all. We tend to estimate NN as a very simple story while reading OMF as a symbolic prose poem. The present estimate seems to me to polarise the two novels unfairly and to misrepresent, just as much as the earlier accounts did, their inspiration and their structure. I wish again to stress the similarities of the two and to show how, beneath the paraphernalia of plot, Dickens in both cases developed an underlying theme. I am not suggesting that NN is as carefully planned as OMF, nor so successful

as a novel, but simply that it too contains a coherent statement about society. Dickens' creative imagination tends to work, often against the conscious mind which contrives the plot, as an integrating force which makes of each novel a single statement and it certainly does so in NN.

McSpadden, in the foregoing synopses, seems to use "plot" and "theme" synonymously, an approach vastly injurious to an author who lives so much more in language and imagery than in the situations he describes. The same misrepresentation would occur in Lamb's Tales from Shakespeare, if they were regarded as adequate accounts of the plays. At the same time, the basic framework of the melodramatic plot, with its simplistic presentation of good and evil, is ideal for Dickens' purposes. It is useless to pretend that he would have written more complexly without his melodramatic inheritance; that his imagination did not "that way tend" from the beginning. From Mr Pickwick's first blazing into the world like a rising sun, Dickens was concerned with, as it were, separating the light from the darkness. The melodramatic framework satisfied this basic concern and gave him room and confidence to develop other, to us more significant, ideas. Without that framework, as G.K. Chesterton argues, he would never have been able to grow beyond the "Sketches" and would have survived simply as a minor writer.³

It might be best to begin, unfashionably, by considering not the finished achievement but the author's intention in each novel. In both the prefaces to NN Dickens talks at length of the Yorkshire schools he longed to destroy. The second preface reprinted in the Everyman edition, reveals, in several vituperative sentences, the continuity of his interests and imagination. There are several later novels to which that preface might also apply:

Of the monstrous neglect of education in England, and the disregard of it by the state as a means of forming good or bad citizens, and miserable or happy men, private schools long afforded a notable example . . . they formed the worthy cornerstone of a structure which, for absurdity and a magnificent high-minded "laissez-aller" neglect, has rarely been exceeded in the world.

The State is equally indictable in Oliver Twist, later in the Circumlocution Office, in its legal aspect in Bleak House and in OMF where Betty Higden runs to escape from its iron embrace. There is also a continuing relevance in the implication that men are largely formed by their environment. Though Dickens' characters do not "develop" as in a realistic novel, they have definitely "become" what they are. The Infant Phenomenon is fed gin-and-water, Smike hard words and blows--and both are irretrievably stunted, one in body, the other in mind; before his death, we are told what Lord Frederick Verisopht might have become; in David Copperfield and

Steerforth, Pip, even Little Paul in Dombey and Son, in Richard Carstone, Arthur Clennam and finally Eugene, Dickens explores the freedom of human beings--how far can they make themselves (as Headstone tries to do) and how far are they the prisoners of environment? Always the question is asked in relation to society--"good and bad citizens" rather than individuals. Even here in NN, where the grip of Society is much less evident than in the later novels, it is described with the monumental solidity of a building: "they formed the worthy corner-stones of a structure." The building image was to develop into central importance in for example Little Dorrit. There are thus in the preface to NN many of Dickens' habitual concerns, expressed in a way which had changed little by the time he wrote OMF. In the postscript to that novel, he writes of the Poor Law:

I believe there has been in England, since the days of the Stuarts, no law so infamously administered, no law so often openly violated, no law so ill-supervised. In the majority of the shameful cases of disease and death from destitution that shock the Public and disgrace the country, the illegality is quite unequal to the inhumanity--and known language could say no more of their lawlessness.

Without wishing to underestimate or deny the depth and genuine passion of Dickens' social concerns, I would maintain that they have no central position in his artistic vision and serve purely a motor function: they supply the venom, as it were, to force him into writing. In his opening chapters, in both NN and OMF, he shows a

sure artistic grasp, not of polemic but of artistic themes. In NN there is no mention of Yorkshire schools, but what appears initially to be a traditional eighteenth century opening--an account of the previous generations of the Nickleby family. There is much more to it than that. As its title declares ambitiously, this first chapter really "introduces all the rest." It states what first and last is the theme of NN, however intermittently pursued, the difference between romance and reality, exemplified in the plot in attitudes to money. In OMF, as Kenneth Muir observes, almost every character is tested, usually according to wealth.⁴ It is a continuing motif in Dickensian plots. Nicholas' refusal to sue for the hand of Madeline Bray because of her wealth is complemented by John Harmon's concealment of affection for Bella because of his wealth; Arthur Gride might be an entry in Mr Boffin's book of Misers; Pluck and Pike, like Boots and Brewer, make their living as parasites of the rich; and the main action of each book is the discovery by the protagonists of the true allocation of wealth--the disposition of Ralph's money and of the Harmon Fortune.

In OMF, wealth is linked with society's decay; in NN, with the ruin of the world of romance. In the opening chapter, Mr Godfrey Nickleby is proved to be on the side of the angels by being other-worldly: he "had wedded an old flame out of mere attachment, who in her turn

had taken him for the same reason. Thus two people who cannot afford to play cards for money, sometimes sit down to a quiet game for love." The motif is reversed in the Lammles' marriage in OMF. In NN it recurs throughout the novel and is sounded finally by the Cheeryble Brothers: "How dare you think, Frank, that we would have you marry for money, when youth, beauty, and every amiable virtue were to be had for love?" (Chapter 63, Page 824). The unworldly Mr Nickleby, Nicholas' father, in the Introductory Chapter, sees the "real" world in its darkest hue: "A painter who has gazed too long upon some glaring colour, refreshes his dazzled sight by looking upon a darker and more sombre tint; but everything that met Mr Nickleby's gaze was so black and gloomy a hue" The colour division between the "light and finery" of romance and the darkness of the world of money is epitomised in Smike's vision of the stage⁵ and permeates the book, even to Ralph Nickleby's dark office being set in "Golden Square." The two brothers represent these two opposites. Nicholas' father as a boy decides early to "shun the great world and attach himself to the quiet routine of country life" while Ralph decides that "riches are the only true source of happiness and power." The juxtaposition of opposites is essential to Dickens. In NN the patterning may seem allegorically simple, but it is basically little different in the more complex OMF. Mr Boffin, the book's

Cheeryble figure, keeps his wealth in a Bower (with its links with the countryside) and uses it for good; the Veneerings' wealth shines in material things in the City and is used for evil. In NN the two brothers motif is counterpointed by the Cheeryble Brothers, Ralph's natural foils. At the Cheeryble Feast, the climax of goodness in the story, the preface is recalled:

"What!" [cries Charles to Nicholas and Kate]
 "You are the children of a worthy gentleman!
 The time was, sir, when my dear brother Ned
 and I were two poor simple-hearted boys,
 wandering almost barefoot, to seek our for-
 tunes; are we changed in anything but years
 and worldly circumstances since that time?
 No!"⁶

The world of romance is thus vindicated not only as something invulnerable from the world of money, but as more powerful on money's own terms, in a worldly sense.

Nicholas' father proved himself on his deathbed to be one of the Cheeryble clan; he too refused to admit reality and clung to his vision of the world as he--and Dickens--thought it ought to be: "They were concerned to find that his reason went astray after this; for he babbled, for a long time, about the generosity and goodness of his brother and the merry old times when they were at school together" (Chapter I). There is a quiet irony here at the expense of those who do not take the dying man seriously. Dickens in NN is in no doubt that Romance is true and that money and the reality it stands for are grossly misleading: "gold conjures up a mist about a

man, more destructive of all his old senses and lulling to his feelings than the fumes of charcoal." Whenever romance and reality are contrasted in NN, as they are even in details like the true nature of Snow Hill (Chapter 4), the truth about Dotheboys Hall, the fantasies of Mrs Nickleby and the Crummles', Dickens never wavers in his support for romance. Reality is therefore presented in very harsh colours in the persons of Squeers, Gride and Ralph.

In OMF the contrast is much more muted. Colours are muted too. There is no Nicholas to see the world as "a picture . . . too bright to bear"; in OMF "the national dread of colour has an air of mourning"⁷ and the sun rises dimly through the fog. The opening chapter describes unequivocally the decay of Society. Man like an insect lives off the bodies of his own kind. It is a careful preparation for the introduction of the Veneerings in the subsequent chapter, where the moral decay is described figuratively. In the third chapter the two worlds are deliberately drawn together as Eugene and Mortimer investigate the Harmon murder and the novel's concerns are thus solidly established from the beginning. Obviously the conscious planning in OMF is more subtle than in the earlier novel but in NN too themes are stated and repeated.

In each case Dickens needs to recreate the world by finding a character who is new to it. It is a

classic novelistic device, particularly important to Dickens because to establish his own surrealistic world he must destroy preconceptions of a place or situation and build it up afresh through the eyes (as Mr Moddle would say in Martin Chuzzlewit) of "Another." Thus McSpadden's account of NN as "the adventures of a young man during the first months when he started out in the world for himself" does capture that novel's spirit. Nicholas' bright world is soon besmirched by the "realities" presented by the other characters, but it emerges triumphant in the end. In the same way Arthur Clennam's London sets the scene for Little Dorrit and Esther Summerson's version of the city gives the setting for Bleak House. In OMF Dickens intended to build on a similar beginning. He wrote to Forster

I think . . . a man, young and perhaps eccentric, feigning to be dead and being dead to all intents and purposes external to himself and for years retaining the singular view of life and character so imparted would be a good leading incident for a story.⁸

This notion of death-in-life haunted other nineteenth century writers too. Browning in "Karshish" and Tolstoy in the death of Andrei and escape from death of Pierre in War and Peace both explore the objectivity of those touched by death. It is as if, before the triumph of subjectivity in the twentieth century, writers searched vainly for some view of life which could be called "true." The residue of the idea remains in OMF in Jenny

Wren's summons "Come up and be dead"; it haunts Dickens still in Doctor Manette being "restored to life" in A Tale of Two Cities and in my opinion it emerges again in "Edwin Drood." In John Harmon, however, the notion perishes. There seem to be too many intrusive subsidiary worlds in the novel for Harmon to have any impact as a character, however vital he is to the plot. His original role is most nearly adopted by Eugene: both are described as "buried alive" and Eugene goes on to re-enact the life-and-death struggle with the river which Harmon has already described.

The notion of "beginning the world" lends itself to the basically allegorical inspiration of NN and OMF whereas the actual structure, arrangement of scenes and climaxes may seem, in NN at least, to have been lifted wholesale from melodrama. The well-known discussion in Oliver Twist⁹ in which Dickens declares his allegiance to the organising principle of melodrama, seems to describe prophetically the organisation of NN. The presentation of a novel in monthly parts lends itself to that alternation of the tragic and the comic scenes as the "layers of red and white in a side of streaky bacon" and to the imitation in book form of the scenic divisions of the stage. In the postscript to OMF Dickens outlines the disadvantages of the monthly numbers method while hinting only vaguely at the corresponding gains:

It would be very unreasonable to expect that many readers, pursuing a story in portions from month to month through nineteen months, will, until they have it before them complete, perceive the relations of its finer threads to the whole pattern which is always before the eyes of the story-teller at his loom. Yet, that I hold the advantages of the mode of publication to outweigh its disadvantages, may be easily believed of one who revived it in "The Pickwick Papers" after long disuse, and has pursued it ever since.

Dickens seems to be claiming to be the complete novelist with "the whole pattern always before the eyes of the storyteller at his loom"; I think he is being somewhat disingenuous, as his skating over the advantages of the more dramatic method suggests. Certainly the theme of the novel permeated his artistic vision from the beginning, as the careful planning of the opening scenes prove; but what he is talking about in the postscript is not theme but plot and it is equally certain that that grew and changed just as it did in the earlier novels.¹⁰ Dickens is much more self-consciously a novelist in OMF and seems in the postscript and from the evidence of the subdued rhetoric in the novel to be suppressing his dramatic heritage. This does not noticeably change the growth of the action however, since in both novels it is through juxtaposition of scene and character rather than through dramatic narrative that the story develops. Dramatic scenes do occur frequently and within them "the unities" as Mr Curdle would insist, are carefully observed; but Dickens' movement from sketches to novel-

writing is achieved, not by dramatic means, but by a peculiarly poetic organisation of analogous scenes and characters to give significance to the whole. Chapters Twenty-five, Twenty-six and Twenty-seven in NN for example, give three overlapping pictures of role-play. On the first level is the romance of the Crummles troupe acting Romeo and Juliet; superimposed on that is the equally theatrical pursuit of Kate by Sir Mulberry Hawk; finally there is the counterpoint of the Wititterlys with their parody of romance, complicated by being set against the extract from the French novel. At the end, Dickens points out the link between acting on the stage and in life: "Here both Mr and Mrs Wititterly, who had talked rather at the Nicklebys than to each other, left off and looked at their two hearers, with an expression of countenance which seemed to say 'What do you think of all this?'" In fact they are waiting, like all the other characters, for an audience to applaud.

Similar and much more complex juxtapositions occur in OMF: the first two chapters, with their literal and then figurative descriptions of Society's decay; the progressive decline of Wrayburn and Headstone, hunted and hunter, set against one another (III, x and xi) as they each take a step downhill in the pursuit of Lizzie, the one employing Mr Dolls, the other Riderhood; and throughout, the conscious interweaving of chapters evident in their titles. Even in a brief glance at the

pairing of chapters in OMF one can see the progress of the juxtaposition method: "The man from somewhere"; "Another man" (two roles for John Harmon); "Mr Boffin in consultation"; "Mr and Mrs Boffin in consultation" (a contrast between Lightwood's complex account of life and Mrs Boffin's simple-hearted grasp of essentials); "Tracking the bird of prey"; "The bird of prey brought down" (the increasing suspense of the pursuit of Gaffer); "A Respected Friend in a new aspect"; "the same respected friend in more aspects than one" (the contrast between Riderhood close to death and the Rogue returned to life); and at the close of each of the four books comes a vista of Society as it then stands: "A Dismal Swamp" in Book I; "An Anniversary Occasion" in Book II (the Lammles' new example of moral decay, generated by the Veneerings); "A Social Chorus" (the downfall of the Lammles and a glimmer of hope of arresting the decay); and finally "The Voice of Society", a rather contrived affirmation, through Twemlow, of the continued existence of good. The strands of plot are traced in the weaving of different metaphors. There is the nautical metaphor--"On the Look-out" and "Cut adrift"--which follows the fate of Gaffer; the hunting images of "Tracking the bird of prey," "The Bird of Prey brought down," "more birds of prey," "Setting traps" and finally "What was caught in the traps that were set" which trace the pattern of murder and retribution; Silas Wegg's private plot is

labelled "A Friendly move" and is traced from the moment it "is originated," while it "takes up a strong position" until it finally receives "Checkmate"; the money motif is represented in the "Golden Dustman," the business-like title of the loveless "Marriage Contract," "The Orphan makes his will" which contrasts the childish generosity of Johnny with the corruption of the miser Harmon, and the closing irony of "Concerning the Mendicant's Bride," where Bella discovers riches need not be connected with money; lastly there is the binding fairytale element with the emblematic progress of the Golden Dustman who "falls into bad company," is seen "at his worst," "rises a little," "sinks again" and in a last triumphant image of cleansing, "helped to scatter dust"; he is reinforced in his fairytale by the "riddle without an answer," "Mr Wegg prepares a grindstone for Mr Boffin's nose," "The Feast of the Three Hobgoblins," "a Few Grains of Pepper" and the final victory of the nursery figure, "the Dolls' Dressmaker." All the major elements of the novel find their way into the chapter headings and reveal a complex metaphorical underworld in which the cruelty of fairytale, the savagery of social satire and a clear poetic vision are mingled and in which, as in fairytales, evil strikes a much more vibrant and enduring chord than good, despite that conventional condescension which all children ignore, of the "happy ending."

The juxtaposition approach is used too in the positioning of characters. In NN there is a direct polarisation of good and bad, the good in the Nickleby cottage and later round the Cheeryble table, the bad in Ralph's dark office and sinister house. In OMF a similar movement occurs. The Boffins act as the magnet of the good characters, drawing to them John Rokesmith, Bella, Betty Higden, Georgiana (in a confrontation with Mrs Lammle) and indirectly, Lizzie, via Bella. Meanwhile at Eugene's bedside gather the dolls' dressmaker and Mortimer, both of whom are linked to the Boffins, Jenny at the end of the story through their protégé, Sloppy. Balancing them are the Veneerings, Podsnaps and Lammles, with a link through the last-named to Fledgeby. They represent evil on one level of Society; Riderhood and Headstone unite in a separate evil centre. Theirs is individual rather than social corruption and whereas there is hope for Society, the two individual villains can only be destroyed. In the course of the novel, characters move to their true camp. Eugene, Mortimer and Twemlow all make a stand against Society; Charley Hexam slinks away from his sister to Headstone; Wegg is eventually exposed by Venus and Mr Boffin; Riah leaves the service of Fledgeby. The whole social development of the novel appears in the titles of the four books: "The Cup and the Lip" shows the slips made by every

character in coming into an inheritance: the Boffins, John Harmon, Bella, the deluded Lammles, Gaffer strangled in his search for prey--all end swamped in discontent; in the second book, the rising action consists of alliances being made: Jenny Wren and Lizzie, Charley and Headstone, the Lammles beginning their deadly teamwork, Venus and Wegg originating their "friendly move," the Boffins drawing Betty Higden and her children to them, John Harmon first in soliloquy and then in attempted alliance with Bella--"A solo and a duet"--and all under the explanatory title "Birds of a Feather"; Book III shows the falling action, with Mr Boffin seeming to be sinking to his destruction; and at the end of that "long lane" comes that favourite Dickensian moment, "A Turning," with a quick succession of denouements and deaths until, in "persons and things in general," the penultimate chapter, everything seems to be settled to the author's satisfaction. The significant difference from NN is that, whereas Dotheboys Hall is closed down, Ralph hanged and Gride discredited, Society in OMF is there in the final chapter and the choice of concluding scene gives an underlying pessimism to the forced optimism of the solution.

Characters too can be juxtaposed and the judgements made on them are part of the book's development. In NN the judgements are predictable and clear: Miss La Creevey deserves Tim Linkinwater because of the praiseworthy

industry they share; Newman Noggs is a good character because of his right values--devotion to Nicholas and condemnation of Ralph; the Cheeryble brothers are "child-like," the highest Dickensian accolade; Mrs Nickleby is so successful that she is beyond judgement--but the narrator reminds us frequently, in case we are tempted to judge, that she is "weak but goodhearted"; the aristocrats are doubly condemned--for wealth misapplied and for idleness. In OMF characters are similarly measured against identical criteria: Jenny Wren is praised for her industry, Abbey Potterson for her sense of justice, Riah for his gratefulness, Sloppy for his loyalty, Betty Higden for her sense of purpose and courage and Messrs Wilfer and Boffin for their Cheeryblean childlikeness. There is a development however: Dickens dares now to show the bad side of good qualities: the shrewishness of Jenny Wren, the misguided actions of Betty Higden and Riah, and the weakness of R. Wilfer, no figure of power like the Cheerybles, but an emasculated drudge. The condemnations too are more subtle: Mr Dolls behaves despicably but makes us laugh; Charley Hexam has every right to sympathy and only gradually sinks into ingratitude, as an antithesis of Riah; the Veneerings are not openly condemned, but simply presented committing another cardinal Dickensian sin--making a travesty of good fellowship. Their feasts, symbols of friendship and community, are

presented metaphorically as poisoning the participants. Most complex are the cases of Eugene and Headstone. In the world of NN it is the hero who is the struggling schoolmaster and the villain who is the idle aristocrat in pursuit of an innocent girl from a lower class. Idleness has always been condemned by Dickens and industry praised and here Headstone's achievements are fairly presented. In the years since the writing of NN, however, Dickens' novels have reflected more and more the oppressive nature of Society and by OMF it has become to him completely pernicious. Industry is therefore insufficient unless it is the exercise of the will against the social will. Conformity, though it involves extreme hard work and effort, is implicitly condemned. Headstone has that fixed purpose which Eugene lacks, but he has allowed himself to be crushed by Society. The obsessive, destructive nature of his passion for Lizzie results primarily from his constant repression of his true self into an unhealthy respectability. Eugene, with the divine intervention of the author, is forced out of society and seems to gain a fixed purpose and the freedom of will of the hero. The impression given, however, is that his negative comments before his salvation-by-water hold much more conviction than his subsequent evangelical fervour. It is doubtful if Dickens' vehement stand against Society was accompanied by any strong vision of a positive alternative. The sense of abhorrence is

very clear: in NN individuals like Gregsbury the politician cause corruption; in OMF there is corruption in the very fabric of society--Veneering has its complete support in his stand for election.

In OMF relationships too are explored through parallelism and contrast. The parent-child theme, stated in the opening chapter through Lizzie and her father, is repeated, developed, and reversed in Bella and Jenny and their father/children, in the tyranny of Mr Podsnap over Georgiana and of Riderhood over Patience, the role-play of the Lammles wedding when Twemlow acts as father, the ironical childlessness of those quintessential parent-figures, the Boffins, and behind the action, the original cruel parody of fatherhood in the elder Mr Harmon. Such elaborate character-clusters tend to overshadow the simpler use of the method in the earlier novels. In NN there are the beginnings of the process: in the upbringing the Squeers and Kenwigs give their children, the reversed roles of Kate and Mrs Nickleby and in the revelation of Smike's true parenthood. Kate and Nicholas are allegorically untouchable by environment, but in the other cases the burden seems to be that parents get the children they deserve. In OMF, in John Harmon, Bella, Eugene, Lizzie, Charley and Jenny Wren, there is a much more hopeful assertion of individual will over environment. It seems that, as Dickens' sense of Society's power increased, so did his desire to show the power of

individual human will to withstand it.

The technique of juxtaposing characters and incidents owes something to the theatre and something to the graphic artists, and in his transference of the method to the novel Dickens in the earlier novels often lets the strings show. There is a disguised awkwardness in Chapter Forty-six of NN, for example, which "officiates as a kind of gentleman usher, in bringing various people together" and in the end the Cheeryble Brothers have to "make various declarations for themselves and others" to provide a solution. OMF, with its careful chapter headings and division into four books is more subtly developed. Chapter headings suggest the relative importance of the events within them and "The whole Case so far" is crucially placed at the middle point in the story, the moment of poise before the falling action begins, and clarifies the positions of the central triangle of Headstone, Lizzie and Eugene. Dickens has also developed a technique peculiar to the late novels, the ironical social chorus, led here by the Veneerings, to summarise the moral state of the novel's world. There are earlier examples of the technique in Merdle's parties in Little Dorrit and the "fashionable world" which so persecutes Lady Dedlock in Bleak House. Obviously juxtaposition and counterpointing of action and character was begun in the early novels and did not spring fully-armed from the imagination of that mythical

beast, the "later Dickens."

In purely novelistic qualities such as mastery of description, there is a marked development from the hesitant mixture of styles in NN to the controlled and economical narration on OMF. In NN the descriptions have a static, pictorial quality, as if the author is using them simply as a backcloth to an unrelated action. Chapter Fifty contains a description of "the little racecourse at Hampton . . . in the full tide and height of its gaiety"--a scene which Frith surely transferred to Epsom and then painted in 1858 as his famous "Derby Day." Dickens writes in pictorial terms, borrowing from the other arts as he formed his own: "It was one of those scenes of life and animation, caught in its very brightest and freshest moments" and opens the way for Frith to borrow many details and characters directly: "Old dingy flags grew new again . . . stained rotten, canvas looked as snowy white, the very beggars' rags were freshened up"; there in Frith's painting are "the sunburnt faces of gypsy children," "a farmer well-to-do in the world, with his top-coat over his arm and his flash notes in a large leather pocket-book." Even the shape of the crowd is the same: "a wide circle of people assembled round some itinerant juggler, opposed, in his turn, by a noisy band of music." There is the same movement from the particular to the general, from the singular (in both senses) to the plural: "Drinking

tents were full, glasses began to clink in carriages, hampers to be unpacked, tempting provisions to be set forth . . . and pickpockets to count their gains during the last heat." There are two major differences between the two works and both, I think, are to Frith's advantage and reveal weaknesses in Dickens' style and technique at this point in his career. The first is the attitude to the gypsy children: "In poverty so picturesque," says Dickens, there is a "drop of comfort. It is a pleasant thing to see that the sun has been there; to feel that they are children and lead children's lives; that if their pillows be damp, it is with the dews of Heaven, and not with tears." Frith's gypsy children too are healthy-looking and cheerful, but he has none of Dickens' excessive sanguinity over the happiness of their lot; the focal point of his composition is the acrobat's boy whose glance we follow to the food hamper being unpacked by the nobleman on his left. There is no illusion in Frith's eyes about the nobility of poverty. The boy gives coherence to the whole composition. Life goes on heedlessly around him, but its garishness and superficiality have been summed up in his simple action. In Dickens' composition, in contrast, there is no focal point and therefore no perspective: "The attention so recently strained on one object of interest, was now divided among a hundred; and, look where you would, there was a motley assemblage of feasting, laughing, talking,

begging, gambling and mummary." The last sentence might be the quintessence of early Dickens' descriptions: a brilliant eye for detail which noticed everything but organised very little. Yet it is obviously not in his scene-painting that one should look for Dickens' development as an artist. The "backcloth" to Eugene's "murder" (IV, vi) is described in exactly the same manner, with appeals to the eye and ear and eulogies of "Nature." Despite the fulsomeness of the language the passage is pure romantic prose, and not linked with the qualities which make OMF a "poetic" work. Development in Dickens must be searched for elsewhere.

If we pursue the scenes introduced by these two descriptions to their culmination, in death and apparent death, we find two quite different pieces of descriptive writing:

The sun came proudly up in all his majesty, the noble river ran its winding course, the leaves quivered and rustled in the air, the birds poured their cheerful songs from every tree, the short-lived butterfly fluttered its little wings; all the light and life of day came on; and amidst it all, and pressing down the grass whose every blade bore twenty tiny lives, lay the dead man, with his stark and rigid face turned upward to the sky.

"Out of the question to marry her," said Eugene, "and out of the question to leave her. The crisis!" He had sauntered far enough. Before turning to retrace his steps, he stopped on the margin, to look down on the reflected night. In an instant, with a dreadful crash, the reflected night turned crooked, flames shot jaggedly across the air, and the moon and stars came bursting from the sky.

The NN passage is "fine writing," romantic prose at its best; it uses all the quasi-poetical techniques of romantic prose: the parallel main clauses about the sun, the birds, the short-lived butterfly, and the long-vowelled climax "all the light and life of day came on"; the balancing downward action, the effective pause over the blade of grass and the delayed revelation of the dead man; the apparently emotionless and therefore moving dying fall--"with his stark and rigid face turned upward to the sky," which ends the passage as it began, returning the gaze to the sun. Thackeray uses the same dying fall to describe the death of Osborne on the battlefield; Wilfred Owen employs similar images in "Move him into the sun"; Dickens is in excellent company in subject matter and treatment. The limitation of this passage is that it is not related to the rest of the novel. Verisopht's death is incidental to the story, but the young author expends his powers liberally over it. Too much universal significance is poured over a minor character and there is no objective correlative for the emotion Dickens conveys.

In contrast, the attack on Eugene is perhaps the central incident in OMF and it is described so as to integrate all the levels of the novel. It has been carefully prepared for in the plot by Headstone's outburst "Then I hope I may not kill him!" (II, xv) and suspense has been built up through hints and clues ever

since. It has a metaphorical existence too. Eugene has "sauntered" through the novel, seeking a sense of purpose; as he describes it, he has ever "drifted after [Lizzie] with more and more constancy" since their first meeting. Drifting is no longer pardonable and Eugene's better self is in a deadly struggle with his habitual weaker nature and is about to be defeated. There are sufficient hints earlier in the chapter in his soliloquies to be sure of that:

Again he subsided into a reminiscence of his first full knowledge of his power over her . . . To try no more to go away, to try her again, was the reckless conclusion it turned uppermost. And yet again . . . "I wish I could stop the Lightwood peal, for it sounds like a knell."

Eugene's better nature is dying. Dickens makes that explicit in the subsequent paragraph:

The rippling of the river seemed to cause a correspondent stir in his uneasy reflections. He would have laid them asleep if he could, but they were in movement, like the stream, and all tending one way with a strong current. As the ripple under the moon broke unexpectedly now and then, and palely flashed in a new shape and with a new sound, so parts of his thoughts started, unbidden, from the rest, and revealed their wickedness.

Eugene is about to make the wrong choice and Dickens explains poetically in a return to an earlier image applied, significantly, to Headstone:

If great criminals told the truth . . . they would very rarely tell of their struggles against the crime. Their struggles are towards it. They buffet against opposing waves to gain the bloody shore, not to recede from it.¹¹

There is a deep fatalism here at the heart of OMF and, despite the applied optimism of the ending and the salvation which comes to Eugene with authorial intervention, poetry speaks more insistently than prose. "She must go through with her nature as I with mine," says Eugene earlier in the chapter and the image of reaching a margin and then retracing one's steps back into the old ways tells a poetic truth which belies the plot's solution.

Dickens becomes most truly a poetic novelist when he integrates action and symbol as he does here with Eugene. Twemlow is both an individual and a dying age when he leaves the election party of the parvenu, Veneering in miserable bewilderment:

After having paced the room in distress of mind, with his hand to his forehead, the innocent Twemlow returns to his sofa and moans, "I shall either go distracted or die of this man. He comes upon me too late in life. I am not strong enough to bear him!" (Page 240, II, iv.)

Silas Wegg "declines and falls" like the Roman Empire he reads about and Society decays around him. Even the false dawn of Charley's departure for a new life is exposed prophetically in the imagery as only another stage in the world's decay.

The white face of the winter day came sluggishly on, veiled in frosty mist; and the shadowy ships in the river slowly changed to black substances; and the sun, blood red on the eastern marshes behind dark masts and yards, seemed filled with the ruins of a forest it had set on fire.¹²

In Bleak House, a similar image of Society's decay is the megalosaurus imagined as waddling, in the opening chapter, up Holborn Hill. In both cases images reinterpret the action in the manner of poetic drama.

It is often said of Dickens that his characters cannot encounter one another; that they can only meet in some physical clash in which neither is modified; that in fact there are no true "relationships." This seems to me quite true in a narrow definition of the "action" of the novel. The morality play method of having Nicholas beat Squeers as a statement of the victory of good over evil is a way of stating an idea which does not need character development. Dickens characters are not on stage to learn, but to represent; they have nothing to do with development. Yet surely if anything more complex is to be said they must in some way relate to one another. Everything I have said about the structure of the two novels, the intentions behind them, the juxtaposition method of construction and the nature of Dickens' descriptive power, suggests that his true development as an artist was not in any of these things, but in the language which enabled him to integrate them all. The point is exemplified in the development of his "character clashes." Silas Wegg's discomfiture is little different from Squeers's; Bradley Headstone and Riderhood end their days like Ralph in violent death; the technique of rejecting evil through physical action

is unchanged. But whereas Squeers' downfall is presented as good comedy and Ralph's as good melodrama, the fate of OMF's villains is revealed as part of a developing image of Society's decay:

. . . a scavenger's cart happening to stand unattended at the corner . . . Mr Sloppy found it impossible to resist the temptation of shooting Mr Silas Wegg into the cart's contents.¹³

Riderhood went into the smooth pit backwards, and Bradley Headstone upon him. When the two were found, lying under the ooze and scum behind one of the rotting gates . . .¹⁴

Veneering the "mushroom man" and Fledgeby the "horsefly" are as much part of the "human sewerage" as the more dramatic villains--and they are revealed as such primarily through imagery.

Perhaps the best example of Dickens' use of imagery to integrate all elements of the novel and to create a genuine relationship between characters is the description of the two rivals' pursuit of Lizzie (III, x and xi). Robert Garis, stressing the theatrical element in Dickens, declares that Headstone's final attack on Eugene epitomises the fact that the centrally important relationship between them is never developed. There is merely "melodramatic tension."¹⁵ I have tried to show that "relationship" in any realistic sense, is not Dickens' concern. The relationship between the two is quite adequately summed up by Eugene:

Having made sure of his watching me, I tempt him on, all over London. One night I might

go east, another, north, in a few nights I go all around the compass I study and get up abstruse No Thoroughfares during the day. With Venetian mystery I seek those No Thoroughfares at night, . . . tempt the schoolmaster to follow, turn suddenly and catch him before he can retreat. Then we face one another, and I pass him as unaware of his existence, and he undergoes grinding torments Thus I enjoy the pleasure of the chase.¹⁶

The two characters are juxtaposed and shown each going through with his own nature both literally and symbolically. They pursue their own courses, Eugene strolling, expending his feckless energy on "No Thoroughfares," Headstone fiercely singleminded in pursuit: two natural antagonists forced into continual confrontation because of their identical pursuit. The image of the hunt which runs through the novel in the "birds of prey" and the "setting of traps," prepares for the development of a relationship between these two characters. There is a similarly ambiguous use of the hunt image in "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight" and the same question is asked: who is the hunter and who the hunted? Eugene, the pursued, talks of "the pleasures of the chase." He is roused, as Mortimer notes, to unusual energy and purpose--as if he had caught those traits from his pursuer: "I am a little excited by the glorious fact that a southerly wind and a cloudy sky proclaim a hunting evening." Headstone, when they meet him, is "looking like the hunted, not the hunter, baffled, worn, with the exhaustion of deferred hope and

consuming hate and anger in his face." In the following chapter he is not only a hunted beast, but one already broken by jeering Society: "Tied up all day with his disciplined show upon him . . . encircled by a gabbling crowd, he broke loose at night like an ill-tamed wild animal." In the imagery, Headstone is ill-disciplined and Eugene, gay and insouciant, is the hunter in pursuit. More subtly, both images, hunter and hunted, are applied to Headstone. He is both "a scholastic huntsman clad for the field, with his fresh pack barking around him" and a beast "ridden hard by the Evil Spirits . . . spurred and whipped and heavily sweated." He is pursued not so much by Eugene as by something Eugene rouses in him; Eugene in turn pursues not so much Headstone as the sense of purpose he himself lacks. Lightwood is astonished "that so idle a man could take so much trouble." Eugene and his rival are natural complements. Left to himself, Eugene too would have followed through his own nature to self-destruction in idleness and boredom. Such revelations of character are made possible not in analysis, but in the fabric of the novel, its imagery.

Thus, despite the alleged poverty of his plots, Dickens' structuring of his novels from NN to OMF is vital; it is through juxtaposition of character and event and through the poetic dramatist's use of developing metaphor and simile, that Dickens became a novelist and created his "world."

CHAPTER IV

"CHEAP" MELODRAMA?

The influence of the theatre on Dickens is usually seen as one of the great divides between the early and late novels. Everyone knows that NN is soaked in theatrical references and overly dramatic scenes; in extreme contrast Henry James and others found OMF "so intensely written, so little seen, known or felt."¹ I would like to suggest not only that OMF is as theatrical in its own way as NN, but that the melodrama tradition was essential to Dickens throughout his career--that he was not a passive victim of the decadent drama of his day but that in some respects he actually profitted from it.

The usual dismissive view of "cheap" melodrama is developed by R.C. Churchill² who sees its emergence at the end of the eighteenth century as the result of the absolute stagnation of drama proper: "The remnants of tragedy descended into melodrama and the dregs of comedy dwindled into farce." Dickens himself was perfectly aware of the decline. In Sketches by Boz, in chapters on Astleys and the Private Theatres, he delves into the sordidness of the theatre of the time. Astley's he regards with amused affection; the private

theatres he depicts already with sour disillusionment. At the other end of his career, in The Uncommercial Traveller, he returns to the private theatres and describes one with the metaphorical energy of his later style. Significantly, one central image of death used later in OMF occurs here to describe the death of drama:

Those wonderful houses about the Drury-lane Theatre, which in the palmy days of theatres were prosperous and long-settled places of business, . . . now change hands every week . . . [and] were most ruefully contemplated that evening by the statue of Shakespeare, with the raindrops coursing off his innocent nose . . . In a word, these streets looked so dull, and . . . so broken and bankrupt that the FOUND DEAD on the black board at the police station might have announced the decease of the Drama . . . And yet, on such a night in so degenerate a time, the object of my journey was theatrical. And yet within half an hour I was in an immense theatre, capable of holding nearly five thousand people.³

The last sentences are very revealing. Dickens was still intoxicated by the theatre and took a delight in identifying himself with its audience--a delight which, with the self-consciousness of a famous man, he found rather shameful, and disguised in parody. The instinct to parody what he is fond of--a very English instinct--must be recognised in Dickens if he is to be understood. He pokes fun at the Crummles troupe, while delighting in them; here he pokes fun at the theatre audience, to disguise his genuine involvement:

Many of us--the majority--were not at all clean, and not at all choice in our lives and conversation . . . We were not going to lose

any part of what we had paid for through anybody's caprice, and as a community we had a character to lose. So we were closely attentive and kept excellent order.⁴

The same apparent cynicism disguising real involvement appears in his comments on melodrama:

The Pantomime was succeeded by a Melodrama. Throughout the evening I was pleased to observe Virtue quite as triumphant as she usually is out-of-doors and indeed I thought rather more so. We all agreed (for the time) that honesty was the best policy, and we were as hard as iron upon Vice, and we wouldn't hear of Villainy getting on in the world--no, not on any consideration whatever.⁵

Despite the discouragement of friends like Forster, who thought that interest in the stage was "against his honour as a gentleman,"⁶ Dickens' Thespian instincts proved stronger than his powerful yearning for respectability and perhaps partly account in his novels for the schism between the comic and the melodramatic. (It is this division which now tends to be identified with the division between bad and good Dickens.) According to Churchill, Dickens' comedy is "well-connected," to Jonson and to Shakespeare. His greatest personal success as an actor was as Bombadil in "Every Man in his Humour" and in his own plays there is an obvious imitation of Jonsonian plot and occasionally of character. On the other hand, his "tragedy," says Churchill, seems cheap and vulgar: "His love of the theatre became a liability as well as an asset when it took en masse the conventions of the debased melodrama."⁷

It seems to me that Dickens' most successful comedy could only occur in a novel and is therefore not purely theatrical. The comedy of Humours cannot account for Mrs Nickleby's stream of super-consciousness and even less for the totally verbal world of the Veneering dinnerparties. It is essential for the poetic cohesion of the novel, for example, that Eugene should be visualised as "buried alive" by the other guests in the second chapter: we are to link him with John Harmon, also described as "buried alive" and to compare their fates as each struggles to the surface and finds his true role. Less importantly, it would be impossible for an audience to see Mrs Podsnap as a rocking horse, invulnerable as society itself because wooden and dead--or to maintain on stage the necessary "facelessness" of Boots and Brewer and the "stuffed Buffers." At the same time there is a Jonsonian ruthlessness in, for example, the disposal of Fanny Squeers or Silas Wegg (a character whom G.K. Chesterton for one holds worthy of a better fate).⁸ E.M. Simpson⁹ sees the differences between the two as close to the differences between the Jacobean and Victorian Ages. Jonson, he says, is more of a realist, harder, fiercer, less humane; Dickens, in contrast, is passionate about the need for social reform and has a strong vein of sentiment. The link between them as representatives of their times, is obvious.

It seems then that Dickens could indulge the

comedic part of his theatrical inheritance secure in a sound and intellectually respectable tradition; all laughter, in any case, is "sudden glory." When he tried to be serious he was on much less sure ground, for the only language tradition offered him was that which he had used first in parody. Thus, in using the same style both humorously and seriously, he finds himself holding apparently contradictory opinions. When Nicholas Nickleby is with the Crummles troupe, Dickens throws himself enthusiastically into an imitation of stage rhetoric, gesture and action; when, still within the artifice of a novel, a scene arises which calls for the expression of strong passions, he presents with equal gusto an identical piece of writing, this time assuming a straight-faced response. So confident is he, early in his career, of appropriate reactions from the experienced theatre-going public, that he relaxes and indulges his love of rhetoric, like the member of the audience that he is at heart:

"Away!" was the first word [Ralph] could utter as he literally gnashed his teeth. "Away! What brings you here? Liar, scoundrel, dastard, thief!"

"I came here," said Nicholas in a low, deep voice, "to save your victim if I can. Liar and scoundrel you are, in every action of your life; theft is your trade; and double dastard you must be, or you were not here today . . .

"Girl!" said Ralph, "retire! . . . Retire, you weak and silly wench, and leave this dog to be dealt with as he deserves."

"I will not retire!" cried Kate, with flashing eyes and the red blood mantling in her cheeks . . . "You may use force with me; I think you

will, for I am a girl, and that would well become you. But if I have a girl's weakness, I have a woman's heart, and it is not you who in a cause like this can turn that from its purpose."

"And what might your purpose be, most lofty lady?" said Ralph.¹⁰

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"My curse, my bitter curse, upon you, boy!"
 "Whence will curses come at your command? Or what avails a curse or blessing from a man like you? I tell you, that misfortune and discovery are thickening about your head; that the structures you have raised, through all your ill-spent life, are crumbling into dust; that your path is beset with spies; that this very day, ten thousand pounds of your hoarded wealth have gone in one great crash!"

"'Tis false!" cried Ralph, shrinking back.¹¹

This extended extract, splendid stuff that it is, contains almost all that Dickens took from melodrama: the archaic vocabulary, including Kate's impersonation of Good Queen Bess and "wench," "Tis," "lofty lady"; characters fined down to their simplest forms; emotions presented in stylised gestures--Ralph "literally gnashed his teeth"; most of all, the rhetorical structure of the speeches, their rise through short sentences to a climax, the careful counterpointing of Ralph's first speech in Nicholas' reply. Michael Booth's account of "English Melodrama,"¹² dealing though it does with the theatre alone, might be a perceptive account of NN. The hero, he discovers is "that character who displays spectacularly all the attributes of courage save forethought, intelligence and modesty." He is given, as Nicholas is, to moral speeches: "I own no man my superior

who can be guilty of cruelty or injustice. I spurn beneath my feet the miscreant who would use violence to a woman."¹³ He is distinguished (for purposes of identification as well as to make a moral point) by high-flown vocabulary. Nicholas is remarkably consistent in this, even when in the "low" company of John Browdie: "Pray dispense with this jesting"; "I shall have an altercation with this honest blockhead."¹⁴ His simplest requests are couched in arcane grammatical constructions: "If you look so distressed to see me, you will add to the pain I feel already, at being compelled, for one night, to cast myself upon your slender means for food and shelter."¹⁵ The heroine is exemplified by Kate. According to Booth, "at some point usually early in the play, the heroine begins to suffer. After that, anything can happen to her" For the heroine "probably the most useful practical quality is speed Through thousands of melodramas runs the frantic heroine, hair streaming out behind her, dress 'in disorder,' the forces of evil in close and determined pursuit."¹⁶ Kate is spared the sprinting, but is otherwise the ideal heroine, in sentence structure too:

Weary woman as I am--worn as I am by fatigue--
cold as I am with the dews of the night--
. . . I will force my way to my father's
feet.¹⁷

"Oh Uncle!" exclaimed Kate, clasping her hands. "What have I done--what have I done--that you should subject me to this? If I had

wronged you in thought or word or deed, it would have been most cruel to me, and the memory of one you must have loved in some old time.¹⁸

On this evidence, Dickens absorbed from melodrama a language of gestures, a distinctive style of speech and a basic structure of ideas. I would like to claim that all three, far from being detachable "foreign bodies" within his work, in fact were borrowed because they fitted so well his own natural inclinations. The vocabulary of gesture is part of his natural mode of perception. From the beginning it is exaggerated and has a style of its own. In NN Newman Noggs grimaces and postures, Verisopht sucks his cane, Ralph gnashes his teeth, Miss Knag tosses her head, Mr Mantalini strokes his moustaches--even incidental characters like Tom the ugly clerk in the Employment Office, are set into motion like puppets: "'I know-what gal, eh?' whispered Tom, shutting one eye and cocking his chin in the air."¹⁹ Characters in OMF are equally equipped with the rhetoric of gesture: Fledgeby feels for his imaginary moustache, Lammle caresses his whiskers, Podsnap dismisses the world with a wave of his arm. Riah is one of the few serious characters who also uses this language: "He made a little gesture as though he kissed the hem of an imaginary garment worn by the noble youth before him."²⁰ Even pieces of pure observation are converted into a stylised vocabulary. Patience Riderhood, for example,

shared with most of the lady inhabitants of the Hole, the peculiarity that her hair was a ragged knot, constantly coming down behind . . . the ladies would be seen flocking from all quarters universally twisting their back hair as they came along, and many of them . . . carrying their back combs in their mouths.²¹

Melodramatic gesture has the same stylised quality, but is even further removed by long tradition from actual observation. Humorous characters in both novels follow the same rules for expressing emotion as the serious ones and frequently use melodramatic conventions: Mrs Kenwigs clasps her children "alternately to her bosom with attitudes expressive of distraction,"²² Mrs Veneering gives herself to her husband's election campaign "in a distracted and devoted manner, compounded of Ophelia and any self-immolating female of antiquity you prefer."²³ The serious characters indulge in none of the eccentric movements described earlier, but within their own rigid melodramatic tradition, are equally spectacular. Dickens' use of that rigid convention had changed not at all by the time he wrote OMF. Nicholas, hearing the plot to capture Madeline Bray, "with a face of ashy paleness, and trembling in every limb, . . . darted from the house";²⁴ this is a model of restraint compared with Bradley Headstone's technicolour behaviour during his second interview with Lizzie: "his face turned from burning red to white, from white to burning red, and so for the time to lasting white."²⁵ Convention so

conditions one's vision that Dickens sees Headstone "striking himself on the breast," "repeating that former action of the hands, which was like flinging his heart's blood before her on the paving stones" and "banging his clenched hand down upon the stone with a force that laid the knuckles raw and bleeding."²⁶ It is the heritage of earlier novel-writing and of contemporary melodrama which Dickens exploits here and in so many scenes and gestures at every stage of his career--and it is, when done well and with conviction as in NN, a very powerful way of presenting simple situations. There is no doubt and no pretension in Dickens' early artistic motives. In a tribute to Thackeray he asserts that "every good actor plays direct to every good author, and every writer of fiction, though he may not adopt the dramatic form, writes in effect for the stage."²⁷ When critics strive to separate the "serious" Dickens from the extravagant melodramatic writer who pervades his work, they tend to throw the artistic baby out with the bathwater. The power of an unself-consciously dramatic Dickens is shown at the end of Chapter Fifty-one in NN. Newman Noggs plays consummately to the gallery and Nicholas seems to be auditioning again for the Crummles' troupe:

"Are you blind, deaf, senseless, dead?" said Newman. "Do you know that within one day, by means of your Uncle Ralph, she will be married to a man as bad as he, and worse, if worse there is? Do you know that within one day she will be sacrificed, as sure as you stand

there alive, to a hoary wretch--a devil born and bred?"

There is no attempt here to disguise the excesses of rhetoric. The speakers seem ready to break into blank verse: "'Be careful what you say,' said Nicholas, 'for heaven's sake be careful!'" The final curtain is well-planned:

Rage, astonishment, indignation and a storm of passions rushed through the listener's heart as the plot was laid bare. He no sooner understood all, than with a face of ashy paleness, he darted from the house.

"Stop him!" cried Newman Noggs, bolting out in pursuit, "he'll be doing something desperate--he'll murder somebody. Hallo there, stop him. Stop thief, stop thief!"²⁸

"The listener" and "the plot" identify the situation, which matters far more here than the personalities involved. Stage directions are clearly indicated and there is a good "curtain line" for Newman. The pianist might well now strike up "pursuit" music. Ralph's days are numbered and the reading audience shouts for his blood.

The writer of prose fiction is not, however, a dramatist. Before he realised the need to translate more complex experience into a new novelistic mode, Dickens in NN often lapsed inevitably into an uneasy combination of various aspects of his artistic heritage. "I declare to you I am rendered desperate and know not how to act," says Nicholas at the height of the plot's machinations. He describes the Brothers' absence on business abstruse-

ly: "the sea is between us and them. With the fairest winds that ever blew, to go and return would take three days and nights . . . With reference to them especially I am enjoined to the strictest silence on the subject."²⁹ This amalgam of the language of business, of popular romance and of Shakespearean rhetoric and imagery does nothing to enhance the dramatic situation and a subsequent passage of character analysis into which Dickens seems to have been tempted by the freedom of the novel form would have been advantageously absent from the stage, to which several episodes of NN clearly belong: "Every hope connected with her that he had suffered . . . Every charm with which his memory or imagination had surrounded her . . . swelled his heart almost to bursting."³⁰

Until he had assimilated the various styles of speech available to him, Dickens could not achieve a full integration of language and situation. On the evidence of OMF it may be doubted if he ever did resolve the problem. In the famous interview between Headstone and Lizzie Hexam, a complex situation requiring delicate treatment, he returns to the purely melodramatic mode. It could be argued however that he is more secure and therefore within limits more successful in doing so than in continuing the passages of awkward analysis which he had earlier attempted in describing Headstone. As with Ralph, as Headstone is identified more and more obviously

as the villain of the piece, so the author moves further from him and relies on external description. It is as if Dickens distrusted extreme expressions of emotion and could only approach them within the safe familiar melodramatic formula.

A close study of the scene³¹ reveals the gradual distancing movement. Initially there are several insights into Headstone's nature, implying close identification: "Bradley Headstone held fast by that other interview he was to have with Lizzie Hexam. In stipulating for it, he had been impelled by a feeling little short of desperation, and the feeling abided by him"; "'To be sure, your sister has always shown herself a devoted sister,' said Bradley, willing to sustain himself on even that low ground of hope." Increasingly, however, self-revelation takes the form of crude interior monologue, a transcription of the villain's stagey whisper: "'Except your sister perhaps' thought Bradley. But he only gloomily thought it, and said nothing." External detail begins to tell as much about him as analysis: "'So I supposed,' said Bradley, getting his gloves on his nervous hands, 'So I supposed.'" Then there is an important moment of inside/outside narration: "Being something too soon in their arrival, they lurked in a corner . . . The best-looking of us will not look very well, lurking in a corner, and Bradley came out of that disadvantage very poorly indeed." When,

much later in the scene Bradley refers to this sense of being always at "the greatest disadvantage" in front of Lizzie, it is revealed that his was the point of view presented at the beginning--that he at that earlier moment was narrator, seeing himself as the narrator would. Dickens never dares come closer to Bradley than in that dramatisation of his bitter self-consciousness. With the arrival of Lizzie, he returns to the safety beyond the footlights to watch a scripted performance. It is a very competent script, with Charley Hexam's ignoble clipped tones--"Now, Liz, be a rational girl and a good sister"--acting as foil for the rhetorical force of Headstone, who emerges heroically from the comparison. His language consists mostly of the rhetorical cadences of the simple stage villain; what he reveals of himself through this language, however, are several characteristics of a complex character--lack of confidence, crippling self-consciousness and hopeless depression. Dickens understands him completely from within, yet refuses to describe him except through rhetorical speeches:

It is most unfortunate for me that I want you to see me at my best, and that I know you see me at my worst.

It seems egotistical to begin by saying so much about myself . . . but whatever I say to you seems, even in my own ears, below what I wanted to say and different from what I wanted to say.

I have no resources in myself, I have no con-

fidence in myself, I have no government in myself when you are near me or in my thoughts. .

This is rhetorical speech in its balanced phrases and clauses, its sentences rising to a climax--but it is closer to Chekhov's rhetoric than to the language of "debased melodrama." Only towards the end does the emotion reach the simplified heights of true melodrama:

Oh, that was a wretched day for me! That was a wretched, miserable day!

Bear with me. I am always wrong when you are in question. It is my doom.

The dialogue at this point rises to a more formal register and assumes a pattern of assertion, repetition and response. Lizzie's speech which began colloquially-- "Why, where are you going, Charley dear?" "But it's not in the way, Charley"--rises to fit the occasion and to rival Headstone's, and acquires poise and balance:

Surely, Mr. Headstone, I do believe it.
Surely I have always known it from Charley.

"Why have you not done so?" asked Lizzie
Hexam, "Why do you not do so?"

The formal use of full names further distances the "audience" from the action. The gestures become more stylised:

She glanced at him with a glance of fear and a shrinking gesture . . . he again stood still, and again grasped the stone. In saying what he said then, he never looked at her, but looked at it and wrenched at it.

Any identification of the audience with Headstone is lost. As in the death scene of Ralph Nickleby, we can

only look on, sharing the author's fascinated observation of the criminal mind in action:

He gnashed his teeth and smote the air . . . looking wildly round, with eyes which gleamed through the darkness . . . (NN, Chapter 62, page 816.)

The wild energy of the man, now quite let loose, was terrible . . . The dark look of hatred and revenge . . . broke from his livid lips . . . holding his smeared hand as if it held some weapon and had just struck a mortal blow. (OMF, I, xv, pages 375 and 377.)

It is always such "wild energy" which attracts Dickens' deepest attention. He is not interested in romantic love or in this case the perversion of it. His love-affairs, according to accepted melodramatic convention, are etherealised,³² leaving him free to explore the obsessive energy of the villain. It seems to me that melodrama thus lends itself to Dickens' natural concerns. His vision--even the imagery he chooses--have changed little since Ralph's state of mind was described:

. . . one tender thought, or one of natural regret, in his whirlwind of passion and remorse, was as a drop of calm water in a stormy maddened sea. (NN, page 816.)

No man knows till the time comes what depths are within him . . . To me you brought it; on me you forced it; and the bottom of this raging sea, striking himself upon the breast, has been heaved up ever since. (OMF, page 375.)

Again the development can be pinpointed in a move from simile to metaphor which to me, with the closer involvement it suggests, is the most important shift of perspective in Dickens from NN to OMF. Assertions of a new

concern with the "depths" of human personality seem to me to ignore the persistence of the melodramatic structure; it is always through the rhetoric of this structure that he dares approach complex personality. Always his characters act in society. They have no need of "depth," implying introspection, for everything they are, they externalise.

Melodramatic rhetoric seems to me an essential element in Dickens from beginning to end of his career. From *Smike* to *Bradley Headstone*, his characters have only one register to use when deeply moved:

To go with you--anywhere--everywhere--to
the world's end--to the churchyard grave.
(*Smike* to *Nicholas*.)³³

You could draw me to fire, you could draw me
to water, you could draw me to the gallows,
you could draw me to any death, you could
draw me to anything I have most avoided, you
could draw me to any exposure or disgrace.
(*Headstone* to *Lizzie*.)³⁴

With the present deep distrust of poetic-drama--summed up in the critical fate of Christopher Fry--stylised expression of emotion may be recognised as good of its kind, but is always held in suspicion. Dickens' parodies are much more in favour. Lillyvick's "the plug of life is dry, Sir, and but the mud is left!"³⁵ or Silas Wegg's telling description of Mr Boffin as "the minion of fortune and worm of the hour"³⁶ are more to our cynical taste than "serious" Dickens. Already in Dickens the suppression of the rhetorical impulse had

begun, perhaps forced on him by society, like Headstone's suppression of his passion for Lizzie. At the end of his career, Dickens' style was, like Headstone himself, passion cloaked in respectability. Headstone's sentences build up as if to a climax, then are consciously subdued and fall away. A typical heroic speech at the zenith of the grand language makes no attempt at self-suppression: "He who steps a foot beyond this sacred bound to trample on affliction and distress, shall through my heart-strings cut his hellish path, or pay the full intention with his blood."³⁷ Nicholas' speech is closely modelled on this scarcely disguised blank verse; Headstone's, in the more prosy 1860's, reaches for the heroic, but is suppressed and collapses into more "normal" language: "Stop! I implore you, before you answer me, to walk round this place once more. It will give you a minute's time to think, and me a minute's time to get some fortitude together" (page 376).

As Cockshut says, Dickens "was incapable of being influenced except in the way he wanted to go."³⁸ I have tried to show how the gesture and language of melodrama were absorbed by Dickens because they accorded so well with his natural artistic inclinations; when he tried to suppress them, he became less, not more, himself. These characteristics inhabit OMF as much as NN and it is impossible in any of the novels to skim off the cream of Dickens from the melodramatic element; his

good and bad qualities are inextricably linked and perhaps could not exist except in conjunction. I would finally like to suggest how the structure of ideas implicit in melodrama positively helped his work.

André Maurois³⁹ quotes a letter from Dickens to his son as the latter set off for Australia. It is a letter of simple piety and proclaims a basic non-dogmatic but professedly Christian belief in good and evil. Maurois goes on to present what for him it reveals of Dickens' view of life:

To Dickens, life is far simpler than it is to most novelists. On one side stands the great mass of men, good, kind and gentle; on the other, dreadful ruffians with hangdog scowls, brandishing sticks or fists or knives.⁴⁰

He contrasts with this the more complex "real" world--the world of Anna Karenina and Julien Sorel, a world where questions are asked but not answered. Despite the vast oversimplification of Maurois' definition--where, for example, would he put Crummles or Podsnap or even Pleasant Riderhood?--he continues with an acute account of Dickens' narrative method:

If painters and musicians can succeed, by simple juxtaposition of colours and sounds, in suggesting a philosophy to us, how much more easily should a novelist contrive to do so, by the juxtaposition of characters and events.⁴¹

Melodrama, derived as it was from the old morality plays, enabled Dickens to achieve just such a juxtaposition: it provided him with a plot centring on the destruction

of the bad and the sanctification of the good. In NN and OMF, the wicked end their days in Hell, Silas Wegg on a literal dunghill, Headstone and Riderhood in the slime of the riverbed and Ralph aligning himself with all lost souls: "No bell or book for me! Throw me on a dunghill and let me rot there, to infect the air!"⁴²

The dynamism of the plot comes from the tension between the infecting power of evil and the corresponding magnetism of good. Not only does Lizzie "draw" Bradley, she also, on his own evidence, "haunts and bewilders" Eugene: "I can't go away . . . Because you won't let me . . . I don't complain that you design to keep me here. But you do it, you do it."⁴³

The gradual separation of good and evil in the movement of the characters into opposing camps, is the central action of NN and OMF. There is more to be said for the movement than that it is simply a transcription of melodrama and quite unrelated to "real life." It is apparent that Dickens never attempts "realism." The point he wants to make about Lizzie is not that she is a working girl who succeeds in improving her accent and manners and thus infiltrates into the upper classes. His point is not primarily social at all but moral: how goodness remains unspotted by evil and can summon goodness from others. Lizzie is much less important as an individual figure than Tolstoy's Anna, but this is because Dickens is doing other things in the novel than exploring an

individual consciousness. His illustrators noticed that in the later novels figures mattered less and background more. In Bleak House, for example, "What would usually be background is now the centre of interest. Human figures, when present, are small and insignificant."⁴⁴ Dickens became more, not less, concerned during his career with "separating the light from the darkness" and the basic pattern of melodrama enabled him to do so, while giving a basic shape to the novel. The pattern of melodrama, says Michael Booth, "is what gives superficially chaotic and trivial drama a logical moral and philosophical coherence. It is an allegory of human experience dramatically ordered."⁴⁵ G.K. Chesterton holds a similar position, comparing the simplifications of romance with those of religion. NN he regards as "a turning point" in Dickens' career--for there he adopts at the centre of the story those three essential romantic figures: "St George, the Dragon and the Princess [in other words, the hero, villain and heroine of melodrama]" without whom he might subsequently

have only written short stories . . . We might have lost all Dickens' novels; we might have lost altogether Dickens the novelist. We might have lost that steady love of a seminal and growing romance which gave us towards the end some of his greatest triumphs.⁴⁶

Without NN, in fact, and its "cheap melodrama," Dickens might never have created the "prose poems" of his later years. What Chesterton misses, however, is the fact

that in these later works, beneath the overt secure morality and the plot's reassuring statement that good does triumph over evil and that life is a simple thing, Dickens was at last revealing the poetic vision which suggests through images the essential complexity of life. In OMF it emerges most clearly in the conflicting images of the river:

How can you be so thankless to your best friend, Lizzie? The very fire that warmed you when you were a baby, was picked out of the river alongside the coalbarges. The very basket that you slept in, the tide washed ashore. The very rockers that I put upon it to make a cradle of it, I cut out of a piece of wood that drifted from some ship or another. (Opening chapter, page 3.)

Yet Gaffer is destroyed by that same river:

Everything seemed to be shivering; the river itself, craft, rigging, sails, such early smoke as there yet was on the shore . . . Not a lumbering black barge, with its cracked and blistered side impending over them, but seemed to suck at the river with a thirst for sucking them under. And everything so vaunted the spoiling influences of water--discoloured copper, rotten wood, honey-combed stone, green dank deposit--that the after-consequences of being crushed, sucked under, and drawn down, looked as ugly to the imagination as the main event. (Book I, Chapter xiv, page 162.)

Thus beneath the moral simplicity lay a poetic complexity of vision which came fully to the fore in the later novels. It seems certain that it could not have done so except beneath the simple pattern of "cheap melodrama."

CHAPTER V

DICKENS' LANGUAGE--FROM SIMILE TO METAPHOR

I have hoped to show in the preceding chapters that there is a continuity between NN and OMF in the treatment of character and plot and the presence of melodramatic influence. In this last chapter I will briefly explore the area where the word "development" seems most appropriate: the language of the two novels.

In a discussion of the most obvious strengths and weaknesses of Dickens' style, a brief reminder of the condition of contemporary language might be appropriate. Because of the Romantic reaction against the rigidity of eighteenth century prose, over-disciplined, as Bateson puts it, by The Royal Society, Locke and Johnson's Dictionary,¹ the Victorians had developed two languages, "a language of the heart and a language of the head," and "poetically, the bifurcation was a disaster."² In the writing of poetry, denotation was sacrificed to connotation to such an extent that eventually major Victorians like Tennyson found the language "flabby and submissive,"³ declining in its

vagueness and diffuseness towards the later dreaminess of the PreRaphaelites. Bateson believes that Tennyson's natural style is "something cooler and more concentrated than the condition of language ever permitted him to achieve"⁴ and I would like to make a similar claim here for Dickens.

Ian Gordon describes the development at the end of the Eighteenth century of a division between the Classical prose of Gibbon and Burke, with its intellectual detachment, its balance and antitheses, and the Romantic prose that arose with the advent of Sentiment and which set out to manipulate the feelings of the reader.⁵ The prosewriter moved into the province of the poet, using evocative imagery and breaking down Classical periods into short co-ordinated elements, to achieve an emotional impact. "Prose of this type" says Gordon, "became so common in the nineteenth century that it requires an adjustment of mind to accept that in the late eighteenth century something quite new was being created."⁶ Dickens grew up as an artist while Romantic prose was in its heyday: Gordon writes of the death of Little Nell, "Seventy years later [after the first appearance of Romantic prose], Dickens can still use the manner . . . confident that his readers from the simplest serving girl to Lord Jeffrey will respond with tears."⁷ What Dickens inherited, however, were the extremes of

two traditions: by the end of the Eighteenth century, the development of the central tradition of speech-based prose (passed on later from Jane Austen to Thackeray) had widened the gulf between "Romantic" and "Classical" writing. The former, with its metaphors, manipulation of emotion and "quasi-rhapsodical structures,"⁸ was exploited to its limits during the next century by Ruskin, Thomas Hardy and De Quincey, while the latter had become the "neo-Quintilian rhetoric" of Sir Walter Scott, which soon degenerated into excess and into the "big Bow-Wow strain" of newspaper leaders.⁹ Speech-based prose was quite alien to Dickens' essentially rhetorical style and he was therefore left with two quite different stylistic traditions--two ways, in fact, of presenting his world. From these two traditions he developed, as I see it, four major approaches of his own: when he took the classical tradition seriously, he indulged in the apostrophes of the "lords and gentlemen and honourable boards"¹⁰ and the more apoplectic speeches of Nicholas Nickleby; when, more usually, he parodied the tradition, he produced Mr Gregsbury¹¹ or Mr Podsnap; when he took over the inheritance of Romantic prose, including as it did "the function and some of the techniques of the romantic lyric,"¹² he could write of the pathetic dreams of Dotheboys Hall¹³ or the sufferings of Betty Higden; and finally he evolved from

this background a style uniquely his own, poetic in conception but with none of the floweriness associated with Romantic poetry, which could convey exactly his own vision.¹⁴ These distinctions are over-simplified, but should clarify the difference between the quasi-poetical purple passages derived from a Romantic inheritance, and the truly poetic quality of the novels. The former has already been well-defined:

Dickens' habit of falling into blank verse has sometimes been attributed to his passion for the stage, although many examples of iambic pentameters occur in the prose of authors not noticeably addicted to the theatre.¹⁵

Romantic prose had consciously adopted not only the aims but the techniques of poetry. When Dickens' characters lapse into verse--as Silas Wegg calls Mr Boffin "that minion of fortune and worm of the hour"--they are mercifully pushing the Romantic prose in other parts of the novel over the edge into parody.

The parodic impulse is one of Dickens' main contributions to the language. As Alice Meynell says, he could "banter the worst English of his day by an imitation which shows an author's sense of its literary baseness."¹⁶ His enormous linguistic energy she applauds by describing the forces working against it: she praises "the vitality of his diction, of a style that springs, strikes and makes its way through the burden of custom"¹⁷ and describes vividly the language around him:

Refuse words, too emphatic, with a worn, an abused emphasis; strained rhetoric that had lost its elasticity; grave phrases dull and dimmed--authors worked with these as with the English of their inheritance, sufficiently well-content . . . In the works of Dickens also there are passages of such English, neither gentle nor simple. He writes thus as mere matter of use and custom. But his own lively genius proved itself to be a writer's genius.¹⁸

It is in the banality of his clichés, particularly those in descriptive passages, that Dickens is close to the weakness of Tennyson and he is equally close to Tennyson's strength in the passionate concern for words which informs his own strongest writing. He had, says Alice Meynell, "a genius for words which the habitual indifference of his time, of his readers and of his contemporaries in letters could not quench."¹⁹

Dickens' involvement with words begins in his fascination with the power of names. In NN there are Jabberwockian amalgams of two words to suggest a third: "grind" and "greed" suggest "Gride," "Squint" and "sneers" become "Squeers"; there are simple indications of character or profession like "Cheeryble" or "Nickleby"; there is the unashamed pun of "Verisopht"; Newman Noggs, whose name has the same initials as the hero's, reminds us by that and by his ironical Christian name, of his fall from youth and hope into his present state. In OMF the same techniques are used: "Wegg" from "wooden leg"; "Veneering" and "Lammle" to suggest the superficiality of their characters through links

with "veneer" and "lamine"; and the broad irony of the name of the goddess of love being applied to an articulator of bones and preserver of dead bodies. There is also, as I have suggested, a more emblematic significance to Lightwood ("any wood which burns with a brilliant flame" says the Oxford English Dictionary), Wrayburn, and Headstone, and a poetic contrast between the healthy industry of Jenny Wren and the sickly half-grown parasite, Fledgeby. Riderhood's crude mind can grasp only one or two simple relationships as they impinge on himself and brackets Lightwood, Eugene and Headstone as three degrees of "T'Governor." Eugene suggests his father's institutional power by referring to him always as "MRF"; he shows his casual contempt for Riah by calling him Aaron and for Jenny's father by nicknaming him "Mr Dolls." Always, as with Mrs Squeers, carelessness with names means carelessness with people, for in Dickens the two are closely linked.

Dickens' frequent speculations as narrator into the precise meaning of words is basically a serious business. In NN the theme of romance and reality is sounded in the discussion of the connotations of the name "Snow Hill" (Chapter Four) and the parent/child theme is philosophically and hilariously discussed by Squeers and his crony Snawley in their dialogue on "Nature"²⁰--a passage fit to set beside Mrs Skewton's discourses on the subject in Dombey and Son or even

Falstaff's account of "honour." The World is "a conventional phrase which, being interpreted, often signifieth all the rascals in it."²¹ Stage "punchlines" are created from verbal enquiry, as when Miss Petowker asks: "'What do you call it when Lords break off doorknockers and beat policemen, and play at coaches with other people's money, and all that sort of thing?' 'Aristocratic?' suggested the collector."²²

Dickens is defining his world in NN. "The World" in the novel is presented precisely in terms of "all the rascals in it," as romance is made triumphant; Miss Petowker's definition of what it is to be aristocratic sharpens the indictment made in the Verisopht/Hawk parts of the novel. In OMF the same process continues. A single word can define a character--[Bella sat] "warming her favourite ankle"²³ reveals in the one adjective the spoilt self-absorption of the girl; the Aristocracy is only mildly attacked for instance in Mr Boffin's new house which he finds "beyond doubt Eminently Aristocratic (though a trifle high and dull, which after all may be part of the same thing)";²⁴ the oppression of being forced to play a role appears in R. Wilfer's reluctance "to own to the name of Reginald as being too aspiring and self-assertive a name."²⁵

Dickens' method of looking closely at the "real" world is, like Shakespeare's, to take metaphor and cliché and worry them until genuine meaning emerges.

The best confrontations in his novels are linguistic. In NN Ralph Nickleby strikes a blow for reality against the romance of the Mantalini, using Dickens' own method of parody:

I know his amiable nature and yours--mere little remarks that give a zest to your daily intercourse--lover's' quarrels that add sweetness to those domestic joys which promise to last so long--that's all; that's all.²⁶

This is not merely passing sarcasm, but an attack on an opposing view of life. Ralph hates the very words he utters, and all they represent:

If an iron door could be supposed to quarrel with its hinges, and to make a firm resolution to open with a slow obstinacy, and to grind them into powder in the process, it would emit a pleasanter sound in so doing than did these words in the rough and bitter voice in which they were uttered by Ralph. Even Mr. Mantalini felt their influence, and turning affrighted round, exclaimed "What a horrid croaking!"

Ralph goes into verbal battle against Nicholas' romantic world, understanding it and exposing it mercilessly; when Smike has been presented as the son of the unctuous Mr Snawley, he strikes a blow against Nicholas' heroic pose:

"Your romance, Sir," said Ralph . . . "is destroyed, I take it. No unknown; no persecuted descendant of a man of high degree; the weak imbecile son of a poor petty tradesman. We shall see how your sympathy melts before plain matter of fact."²⁷

In the end, Ralph is defeated by the combined force of the other characters and his author, whose youthful desire that romance should be true is thus vindicated

against all plausibility and against the evidence of his own strongest writing.

The essential conflict between what Dickens wants to say and how he says it continues into OMF, where it exists in the character of Eugene. Eugene's endless cynicism about the world and about himself is the closest Dickens dares come to complete Dostoievskian pessimism. Like Hamlet and like Dickens too, he is forever questioning the clichés of society, clichés which decide the quality of life within it:

"Then idiots talk" said Eugene, "of Energy. If there is a word in the dictionary under any letter from A to Z that I abominate, it is Energy."²⁸

[Mr Boffin comments] ". . . there's nothing like work. Look at the bees."
 "I beg your pardon," returned Eugene, ". . . I always protest against being referred to the bees . . . I object on principle, as a two-footed creature, to being constantly referred to insects and four-footed creatures."²⁹

"I mean to pay him, Eugene, for my part," said Mortimer.
 "Ah, I mean to pay him, too," retorted Eugene, "But then I mean so much that I--that I don't mean."
 "Don't mean?"
 "So much that I only mean and shall always mean and nothing more, my dear Mortimer. It's the same thing."³⁰

You charm me, Mortimer, with your reading of my weaknesses. (By-the-bye, that very word Reading, in its critical use, always charms me. An actresses Reading of a chambermaid, a dancer's Reading of a hornpipe . . . are phrases ever youthful and delightful).³¹

All of Eugene's questionings assert, with Hamlet, "I know not 'seems'." He finds hypocrisy in the work ethic

which suppresses human energy and impulses, in facile good intentions, and even in the possibility of human beings ever understanding one another. He carries war into the heart of Dickensian optimism by refusing to believe in the allegorical purity of the heroine and trying to draw her into his own pessimistic determinism:

And she loves me. And so earnest a character, must be very earnest in that passion. She cannot choose for herself to be strong in this fancy wavering in that, and weak in the other. She must go through with her nature, as I must go through with mine. If mine exacts its pains and penalties all round, then so must hers, I suppose.³²

Lizzie, again with the author's help, triumphs and draws him back to life, as it were, against his better judgment: "There is a sharp misgiving in my conscience that if I were to live, I should disappoint your good opinion and my own--and that I ought to die, my dear."³³ In the end Lizzie has been completely vindicated and the old Eugene is no more; all that is left is another Nicholas Nickleby: "I will fight it out to the last gasp, with her and for her, here in the open field."³⁴ At the last he has cast himself as "Sir Eugene Bountiful," the role he had earlier rejected, and so allows the simple morality play to work itself out.

The failure and the achievement of NN is substantially and inevitably of the same nature as the achievement and failure of OMF. In both there is that continual Dickensian tension between the simple morality of

his age and of his own character, which shaped his plots allegorically, and that poetic sense of the ambiguity of life which simultaneously undermined them. In technique, treatment of character, plot and "theatricality," the two novels are more alike than is usually acknowledged; the most significant development is in language, in the movement from simile to metaphor. In NN good and evil are kept safely apart; Ralph acts the villain and we, beyond the footlights, applaud his downfall. In OMF, there is a dangerously new sense of involvement. Good and evil exist within two complex characters, with both of whom we are encouraged to identify. We are, at different stages, both Eugene and Bradley; we share their points of view. At the end Dickens has to retreat to polarising the two and we withdraw from both to the safety of the footlights once more--but the metaphor has been memorably established. Whereas for the younger Dickens the world was like a stage, for the same man as he grew older it was a "dismal swamp."

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

¹J. Hillis Miller, Charles Dickens: The World of his Novels (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1958), p. 90.

²G.K. Chesterton, Introduction to Nicholas Nickleby (London: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1957), p. ix.

³A.O.J. Cockshut, "Edwin Drood: Early and Late Dickens Reconciled," in Dickens and the Twentieth Century, ed. John Gross and Gabriel Pearson (London: Routledge, Kegan and Paul, 1962), p. 232.

⁴Charles Dickens: The World of his Novels (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1958), p. 86.

⁵Miller, p. 86.

⁶OMF, p. 497 (Bk. III, Ch. ix).

⁷NN, p. 558 (Ch. 42).

⁸OMF, p. 209 (Bk. II, Ch. i).

⁹OMF, p. 324 (Bk. II, Ch. xi).

¹⁰OMF, p. 412 (Bk. III, Ch. ii).

¹¹George Eliot, "The Natural History of German Life," Essays of George Eliot, ed. T. Pinney (London: Routledge, Kegan and Paul, 1963), p. 271.

¹²Quoted in John Forster, The Life of Charles Dickens (1872; rpt. London: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1927), vol. ii, p. 290.

¹³Cockshut, p. 229.

¹⁴NN, p. 279 (Ch. 22).

¹⁵OMF, p. 398 (Bk. III, Ch. i).

¹⁶OMF, p. 6 (Bk. I, Ch. ii).

¹⁷OMF, pp. 29-30 (Bk. I, Ch. iii).

¹⁸John Gross, "Dickens: Some Recent Approaches," Dickens and the Twentieth Century, ed. John Gross and Gabriel Pearson (London: Routledge, Kegan and Paul, 1962), p. xvi.

CHAPTER II: "CHARACTER THROUGH EXTERNALS"?

¹Henry Fielding, The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews, ed. Martin C. Battestin (1742; rpt. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961), p. 51.

²NN, p. 31 (Ch. 4).

³John Harvey, Victorian Novelists and their Illustrators (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1970), p. 61.

⁴Ibid., p. 51.

⁵NN, p. 153 (Ch. 13).

⁶OMF, p. 519 (Bk. III, Ch. xi).

⁷Quoted by R.E. Moore, Hogarth's Literary Relationships (New York: Octagon Books, 1969), p. 111n. Cf. Hogarth in The Analysis of Beauty:

It is strange that nature has afforded us so many lines and shades to indicate the deficiencies and blemishes of the mind whilst there are none at all that point out the perfection of it beyond the appearance of common sense and placidity.

Quoted by Frederick Antal, Hogarth and his Place in European Art (London: Routledge, Kegan and Paul, 1962), p. 49.

⁸NN, p. 505 (Ch. 38).

⁹NN, p. 441 (Ch. 34).

¹⁰NN, p. 503 (Ch. 38).

¹¹Quoted by R.E. Moore, Hogarth's Literary Relationships (New York: Octagon Books, 1969), p. 111.

¹²Moore, pp. 62-64.

¹³NN, p. 455 (Ch. 35).

¹⁴OMF, pp. 9-10 (Bk. I, Ch. ii).

¹⁵Ibid., p. 8.

¹⁶NN, p. 10 (Ch. 2).

¹⁷OMF, pp. 120-121 (Bk. I, Ch. xi).

¹⁸NN, p. 619 (Ch. 47).

¹⁹NN, p. 367 (Ch. 28).

²⁰OMF, p. 103 (Bk. I, Ch. ix).

²¹NN, p. 165 (Ch. 14).

²²OMF, p. 279 (Bk. II, Ch. vii).

²³OMF, p. 771 (Bk. IV, Ch. xvi).

²⁴NN, p. 285 (Ch. 22).

²⁵NN, p. 123 (Ch. 10).

²⁶NN, p. 579 (Ch. 44).

²⁷NN, p. 818 (Ch. 62).

²⁸NN, p. 28 (Ch. 3).

²⁹NN, p. 273 (Ch. 21).

³⁰"Seldom . . . had we read a book so intensely written, so little seen, known, or felt." Henry James, rev. of OMF, The Nation, 21 Dec. 1865, pp. 786-87, quoted in Dickens: The Critical Heritage, ed. Philip Collins (London: Routledge, Kegan and Paul, 1971), p. 470.

³¹Harvey, p. 57.

³²Cf. Little Dorrit (Bk. I, Ch. vii).

³³Op. cit., p. 74.

³⁴OMF, p. 113 (Bk. I, Ch. x).

³⁵OMF, p. 517 (Bk. III, Ch. xi).

³⁶OMF, p. 629 (Bk. IV, Ch. iv).

³⁷OMF, p. 414 (Bk. III, Ch. ii).

³⁸OMF, pp. 538-39 (Bk. III, Ch. xiii).

³⁹OMF, p. 109 (Bk. I, Ch. x).

⁴⁰OMF, p. 555 (Bk. III, Ch. xiv).

⁴¹OMF, p. 52 (Bk. I, Ch. v).

⁴²Charles Lamb, "An Essay on Hogarth," quoted by Harvey, p. 58.

⁴³NN, p. 220 (Ch. 18).

⁴⁴NN, p. 535 (Ch. 41).

⁴⁵Angus Wilson, "Heroes and Heroines in Dickens," Dickens and the Twentieth Century, ed. John Gross and Gabriel Pearson (London: Routledge, Kegan and Paul, 1962), p. 8.

⁴⁶Robert Garis, The Dickens Theatre (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1965), p. 62.

CHAPTER III: STRUCTURE: "ROTTEN ARCHITECTURE BUT WONDERFUL GARGOYLES"?

¹George Orwell, "Charles Dickens," in Collected Essays (London: Heinemann, 1961), p. 80.

²J. Walter McSpadden, Synopses of NN and OMF, The Complete Works of Charles Dickens (New York: Thomas Crowell and Sons, 1904), ii and viii.

³G.K. Chesterton, Introduction to the Everyman edition of NN (1907; rpt. London: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1957), p. viii.

⁴Kenneth Muir, "Image and Structure in OMF," Essays and Studies (1966), p. 96.

⁵NN, p. 292 (Ch. 23).

⁶NN, p. 824 (Ch. 63).

⁷OMF, p. 372 (Bk. II, Ch. xv).

⁸Quoted in John Forster, The Life of Charles Dickens (1872; rpt. London: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1927), vol. ii, p. 291.

⁹Chapter 17.

¹⁰Cf. Forster, Life, p. 292.

¹¹OMF, p. 517 (Bk. III, Ch. xi).

¹²OMF, p. 69 (Bk. I, Ch. vi).

¹³OMF, p. 749 (Bk. IV, Ch. xiv).

¹⁴OMF, p. 760 (Bk. IV, Ch. xv).

¹⁵Garis, The Dickens Theatre, p. 231.

¹⁶OMF, p. 514 (Bk. III, Ch. x).

CHAPTER IV: "CHEAP" MELODRAMA?

¹See note 30, Chapter II, above.

²R.C. Churchill, "Dickens, drama and tradition," Scrutiny, X (1942), p. 359.

³Charles Dickens, The Uncommercial Traveller (1867; rpt. London: Macmillan, 1929), p. 24.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Quoted by Alexander Woolcott, Mr Dickens Goes to the Play (New York: Kennikat, 1922), p. 19.

⁷Churchill, "Dickens, drama and tradition," p. 359.

⁸G.K. Chesterton, Introduction to the Everyman edition of OMF (1867; rpt. London: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1957), p. xii.

⁹E.M. Simpson, "Jonson and Dickens: A study of the comic genius of London," Essays and Studies, 29 (1943), p. 91.

¹⁰NN, p. 727 (Ch. 54).

¹¹NN, pp. 731-32 (Ch. 54).

¹²G.J. Nathan, Another Book on the Theatre (London: 1915), p. 311, quoted in Michael R. Booth, English Melodrama (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1965), p. 17.

¹³H.M. Milner, Masaniello (London: 1829), quoted by Booth, p. 17.

¹⁴NN, p. 247 (Ch. 19).

¹⁵NN, p. 174 (Ch. 15).

¹⁶Booth, pp. 24, 27.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 28.

¹⁸NN, p. 247 (Ch. 19).

¹⁹NN, p. 192 (Ch. 16).

²⁰OMF, p. 261 (Bk. II, Ch. v).

²¹OMF, p. 333 (Bk. II, Ch. xii).

²²NN, p. 170 (Ch. 14).

²³OMF, p. 230 (Bk. II, Ch. iii).

²⁴NN, pp. 689-90 (Ch. 51).

²⁵OMF, p. 326 (Bk. II, Ch. xi).

²⁶OMF, pp. 374-77 (Bk. II, Ch. xv).

²⁷Quoted by K.J. Fielding, Charles Dickens (London: Longmans, 1958), p. 53.

²⁸pp. 689-90.

²⁹NN, p. 691 (Ch. 52).

³⁰Ibid., p. 692.

³¹OMF, pp. 371-385 (Bk. II, Ch. xv).

³²Cf. Margaret Dalziel, Popular Fiction One Hundred Years Ago (Pennsylvania: Dufour, 1958), p. 111: in novels of the time, the relationship of men and women "is dealt with in an etherealised manner. No hint is given of the complexity of sexual love and the force of physical passion."

³³NN, p. 160 (Ch. 13).

³⁴OMF, p. 376 (Bk. II, Ch. xv).

³⁵NN, p. 697 (Ch. 52).

- ³⁶OMF, p. 551 (Bk. III, Ch. xiv).
- ³⁷Thomas Dibdin, Heart of Midlothian (London: 1809), quoted by Booth, p. 17.
- ³⁸A.O.J. Cockshut, "Edwin Drood: Early and late Dickens Reconciled," Dickens and the Twentieth Century, ed. Gross and Pearson (London: Routledge, Kegan and Paul, 1962), p. 229.
- ³⁹André Maurois, Dickens, trans. Hamish Miles (1934; rpt. New York: 1967), pp. 151-52.
- ⁴⁰Maurois, p. 158.
- ⁴¹Ibid., p. 155.
- ⁴²NN, p. 818 (Ch. 62).
- ⁴³OMF, p. 655 (Bk. IV, Ch. vi).
- ⁴⁴John Harvey, Victorian Novelists and their Illustrators (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1970), p. 152.
- ⁴⁵Booth, p. 14.
- ⁴⁶Introduction to the Everyman edition of NN (1839; rpt. London: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1957), p. viii.

CHAPTER V: DICKENS' LANGUAGE--FROM SIMILE TO METAPHOR

- ¹F.W. Bateson, English Poetry and the English Language (Oxford 1934; rpt. New York: Russell and Russell, 1961), pp. 93-94.
- ²Bateson, p. 100.
- ³Ibid., p. 102.
- ⁴Ibid., p. 103.
- ⁵Ian A. Gordon, The Movement of English Prose (London: Longmans, 1966), p. 148.
- ⁶Ibid.
- ⁷Ibid., p. 150.
- ⁸Ibid., p. 159.

⁹Ibid., p. 151.

¹⁰"Yes, verily, my lords, gentlemen and honourable boards . . . For when we have got things to the pass that with an enormous treasure at disposal to relieve the poor, the best of the poor detest our mercies, hide their heads from us, and shame us by starving to death in the midst of us, it is a pass impossible of prosperity, impossible of continuance." OMF, p. 477 (Bk. III, Ch. viii).

¹¹"Next to the welfare of this beloved island--this great and free and happy country, whose powers and resources are, I sincerely believe, illimitable--I value that noble independence which is an Englishman's proudest boast, and which I fondly hope to bequeath to my children, untarnished and unsullied." NN, p. 198 (Ch. 16).

¹²Gordon, p. 158.

¹³"Dreams are the bright creatures of poem and legend, who sport on earth in the night season and melt away in the first beam of the sun, which lights grim care and stern reality on their daily pilgrimage through the world." NN, p. 148 (Ch. 13).

¹⁴"The grating wind sawed rather than blew; and as it sawed, the sawdust whirled about the sawpit. Every street was a saw-pit, and there were no top-sawyers; every passenger was an under-sawyer, with the saw-dust blinding him and choking him." OMF, p. 136 (Bk. I, Ch. xii).

¹⁵W.J.B. Owen, "Mrs Gamp's Poetic Diction," The Dickensian (May 1971), p. 91.

¹⁶Alice Meynell, "Charles Dickens as Man of Letters," in The Dickens Critics, ed. George H. Ford and Lauriat Lane, Jr. (1903; rpt. New York: Cornell Univ. Press, 1961), p. 98.

¹⁷Alice Meynell, p. 96.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 95.

²⁰NN, p. 598 (Ch. 45).

²¹NN, p. 29 (Ch. 3).

- ²²NN, p. 186 (Ch. 15).
- ²³OMF, p. 39 (Bk. I, Ch. iv).
- ²⁴OMF, p. 171 (Bk. I, Ch. xv).
- ²⁵OMF, p. 30 (Bk. I, Ch. iv).
- ²⁶NN, p. 128 (Ch. 10).
- ²⁷NN, p. 603 (Ch. 45).
- ²⁸OMF, p. 19 (Bk. I, Ch. iii).
- ²⁹OMF, p. 88 (Bk. I, Ch. viii).
- ³⁰OMF, p. 267 (Bk. II, Ch. viii).
- ³¹OMF, p. 514 (Bk. III, Ch. x).
- ³²OMF, p. 660 (Bk. IV, Ch. vi).
- ³³OMF, p. 715 (Bk. IV, Ch. xi).
- ³⁴OMF, p. 771 (Bk. IV, Ch. xvi).

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B30049